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# LIFE OF JOHN KEATS

By  
CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN

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Edited with  
an Introduction and Notes  
by  
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and  
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*To* M. B. F.



THE following abbreviations are used in the introduction and notes:

Colvin. Sidney Colvin, *John Keats, His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics, and After-Fame*. Third Edition. London, 1920.

Letters. *The Letters of John Keats*. Edited by Maurice Buxton Forman. Second Edition. London, 1935.

Lowell. Amy Lowell, *John Keats*. Two volumes. Boston, 1925.

Milnes. Lord Houghton (Richard Monckton Milnes), *The Life and Letters of John Keats*. Everyman Edition. London, n.d.

Sharp. William Sharp, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*. London, 1892.



## INTRODUCTION

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A MAJOR biography of John Keats has remained unpublished for nearly a century. It is the *Life of John Keats*, the first biography of the poet, written by Charles Brown. Diligent scholars in the Keats field have unearthed letters, fragments of poems, source material, anecdotes, and relics of the most minute nature. Numerous biographers have given the best of their creative geniuses to an exposition and interpretation of his life and poetry. Critics have delved into the suggestion behind each allusion, figure, and doubtful passage. Anything that was or is John Keats has been made accessible by publication. Yet, paradoxically, the story of his life as written by the man who lived with him during the creation of his greatest poetry has continued to remain in manuscript. Later writers may have usurped Charles Brown's place as biographer through their greater scholarship and literary talent, but no biography can approach in freshness and intimacy the account by that friend who shared his home, his income, and his life with John Keats.

Details concerning the meeting of Keats and Brown are lacking; it occurred, according to Brown, 'in the latter part' of the summer of 1817,<sup>1</sup> when the three Keats brothers, John, George, and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 48, below.



Tom, were living in Well Walk, Hampstead. John saw much of his friends Brown and Dilke, whose double house (Wentworth Place, the present Keats Memorial House) he could reach by a ten-minute walk along the heath. The intimacy of Keats and Brown was strengthened during the following summer; they went to Liverpool with George Keats and his bride, who were emigrating to America, and then, for forty-three days, they walked in Scotland, Ireland, and the Hebrides. They tramped together through pouring rain, dried out together in the next sunshine, ate and complained of the same coarse oat-cakes, thrilled at each sudden view of a mountain-surrounded lake, and, in short, enjoyed every aspect of a congenial comradeship which needed no further influence to ripen into deep friendship. A few months after this memorable trip, when Keats lost his beloved brother Tom and found himself virtually alone in the world, it was inevitable that he should turn to Charles Brown; he moved to Brown's house almost immediately and lived there for most of his remaining months in London.

This domestic arrangement was a particularly happy one for Keats. While he worked, he had uninterrupted hours of quiet in Brown's well-ordered household, and when he had leisure for relaxation during this period of his greatest productivity, he found his host's companionship most congenial. It was under Brown's roof that the great odes, 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', were composed; here, in fact, he wrote the lines

which he modestly believed would place him among the English poets after his death.

But this happy period was short-lived; the winter of 1819-20 brought distressing problems for Keats. Financial troubles loomed on the horizon, for his poetry brought no profit and his inheritance was hopelessly involved in litigation. Brown suggested money-making schemes and flattered the discouraged poet into a little hope. Then came Keats's first haemorrhage and the desperate anguish of his love for Fanny Brawne. For weeks Brown was the nurse who took care of him night and day. When Keats had no more money, Brown advanced the sums necessary to meet his current expenses. During the previous September Keats wrote to Brown, 'I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties';<sup>1</sup> and this daily dependence continued until May 1820, when Brown left once more for the north. Nor was Keats unappreciative of the high character of Brown's help; he wrote to his friend during his voyage to Italy, 'I should think of-you in my last moments'.<sup>2</sup>

The bare outline of this intimate friendship makes even more curious the neglect by the press of Brown's biography. Moreover, the writing of this memoir, extending as it did over a number of years, is a story in itself, a history of the disintegration of the Keats circle after the poet's death. For ever loyal to Keats, his friends fell into quarrels

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 521.

with each other, and the *Life of Keats* was the chief cause of the dissension.

When Keats died in Rome in February 1821 he left a circle of ardent friends, who mourned not only his death but the fact that England had refused to accept him as a great poet. Keats was so little known and so slightly esteemed at this time that his death passed almost unnoticed. To establish his reputation became the ambition of his friends. Every fragment of his work must be collected and published, and, moreover, the vitality of his dynamic personality must be saved from oblivion, for to his friends both the man and his poetry deserved recognition.

John Taylor took the lead in a movement to issue a biography of Keats immediately after his death. As the poet's publisher, he had won Keats's warm friendship with sound advice, generous advances of money, and steady defences of his poetry against critical attacks. Taylor thus knew intimately the details of the poet's life and work. On March 28, 1821, less than a month after news of Keats's death reached London, Taylor wrote to his brother James:

'Perhaps you have not heard of the death of poor Keats. He died 3 days before his defender Scott.<sup>1</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> John Scott (1783-1821), the editor of *The London Magazine*, sharply attacked the series of articles on 'The Cockney School of poetry', appearing in *Blackwood's Magazine* under the signature 'Z'. Keats had been cruelly ridiculed by this anonymous author. John Gibson Lockhart, a leading contributor to *Blackwood's*, was the chief object of Scott's attack; Lockhart's friend J. H. Christie challenged Scott to a duel, which was fought at Chalk Farm, near London, on February 16, 1821. Scott died on February 27 as the result of the wound he received.

ought to be another Blow to the Hearts of these Blackwood's Men. I believe I shall try to write his life—it is the wish of his friends and was Keats's wish also—in that case I shall have Occasion to speak of the Treatment he has met with from the Race of Critics and Lampooners.<sup>1</sup>

According to his granddaughter, Taylor wrote a short account of Keats, which was advertised in the press as soon to appear, but he later abandoned the project, for he 'thought it would give pain to people then living'. Although Taylor's manuscript was preserved for years among his papers, by 1925 it had 'been lost sight of'.<sup>2</sup>

John Hamilton Reynolds, as intimate a friend of Keats as Brown himself, assisted Taylor's endeavours and collected biographical material from a number of Keats's friends. When Taylor gave up his plan, Reynolds decided to write the biography of his friend, but for twenty years he procrastinated. George Keats, in hearty sympathy with the project, desired to help Reynolds in every way. George's residence in America was the chief factor preventing his undertaking the biography himself; he clearly realized that his intimate knowledge of his brother's life and the long letters which John had written him should be utilized, and he wished Reynolds to take full advantage of his information and documents. Many of the letters which George Keats sent from America during the twenties and

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, in the Keats Museum, Hampstead. A sentence from this letter is given in Edmund Blunden's *Keats's Publisher* (1936), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Olive M. Taylor, 'John Taylor, Author and Publisher', *The London Mercury*, xii (July 1925), 260.

thirties to Charles Wentworth Dilke refer to Reynolds as Keats's biographer.<sup>1</sup>

Even in 1846, when Richard Monckton Milnes was preparing his *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, Reynolds clung to his long-deferred intention of writing his own recollections of his friend, and at first he refused to co-operate. When he realized how admirably Milnes was conducting the labour, however, he withdrew his objections, placed all his papers and information at Milnes's service, and felt 'the weight of an undone work' lifted from him.<sup>2</sup>

Of course both Taylor and Reynolds consulted Brown concerning their proposed memoirs. His assistance would have been invaluable, for he had copies of Keats's unpublished poems and had received from Joseph Severn, who had attended Keats so faithfully during his insufferable last months, the papers of the poet in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Brown was willing to assist in these early plans, provided he might be allowed 'a sight of his [Taylor's] memoir before it went to press' and the right 'to approve or condemn in particular passages'.<sup>4</sup>

Charles Cowden Clarke, the friend of Keats's schooldays, acted independently in this matter.

<sup>1</sup> The letters, largely unpublished, are in the Amy Lowell Collection at the Harvard College Library.

<sup>2</sup> See two letters from Reynolds to Edward Moxon, November 27 and December 15, 1846, and one to Milnes, December 22, 1846. John Hamilton Reynolds, *Poetry and Prose* (ed. G. L. Marsh, 1928), pp. 37-9.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Severn to Brown, 'before the end of July', 1821. Sharp, pp. 106 and 109.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Brown to Severn, August 14, 1821. Sharp, p. 109.

While Taylor was still preparing his memoir, Clarke appealed to Brown for assistance in writing the biography. Collaboration between Clarke and Brown would have been fortunate, for Clarke's first-hand knowledge of Keats's early years, when his poetic aspirations were born, would have admirably supplemented Brown's close observation of the fruition of these aspirations. Unfortunately, Brown felt 'conditionally bound' to Taylor and unable to co-operate with Clarke.<sup>1</sup>

However, at the very outset Brown had been shocked by Taylor's haste to write the biography. Brown wrote to Severn late in August 1821:

'Immediately on receipt of your letter announcing poor Keats's death, almost in the same newspapers where there was a notice of his death, even before Mrs. Brawne's family and myself had got our mourning, in those very newspapers was advertised "speedily will be published, a biographical memoir of the late John Keats, &c.,"<sup>2</sup> and I, among others, was applied to by Reynolds to collect with all haste, papers, letters, and so on, in order to assist Mr. Taylor. This indecent bustle over (as it were) the newly covered grave of my dear friend shocked me excessively. I told Mr. Taylor it looked as if his friends had been collecting information about his life in expectation of his death. This, indeed, was the fact. I believe I spoke warmly, and probably gave offence. However, as I was jealous of my own feelings upon such a subject, I took the precaution to sound those of Hunt, Dilke, and Richards, who were all equally hurt with myself at such

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Edmund Blunden was unable 'to trace this announcement to a date earlier than June 4, 1821, in the *Morning Chronicle*' (*Keats's Publisher*, p. 98 n.).

an indecorous haste. I then came to this conclusion, that Messrs. Taylor and Reynolds, who could show such a want of feeling at such a moment, ought not to be confided in by me unreservedly, and since I came to that conclusion, I have had cause to believe myself correct. I will not consent to be a party in a bookseller's job. Perhaps it may turn out otherwise, but in justice to the memory of Keats, I dare not run a risk. Mr. Taylor expected to be trusted implicitly, and takes dudgeon. Now, on such a point I know of none whom I could trust implicitly. He says no one understood Keats's character so well as himself; if so, I who knew him tolerably well, and others of his friends, greatly mistook him, judging from what has dropped from Mr. Taylor—for he is one from whom things *drop*—he cannot utter them boldly and honestly, at least he never did to me, and I have heard Keats say the same of him. What I have written, I have written, and I leave you to judge if you think me right or wrong. I rejoice you sent *me* the papers, and under the circumstances, I think you will rejoice likewise. He is welcome, according to *my* promise, to any information I can afford, provided he, according to *his* promise, allows me a voice on the occasion. In my opinion, Taylor would rather decline the information. If you differ from me in my claim of having a voice, still I have Dilke, Richards, and Hunt on my side. Hunt has some poems, &c., of Keats, and offers them unreservedly to *me*, stipulating, however, that Taylor must not be possessed of them without the memoirs passing under my eye. Why should it be denied to me? Any sort of hesitation will make the business suspicious.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Keats circle was shattered by mutual distrust. Brown, Severn, Richards, and Hunt felt that Taylor was not qualified to write the memoir;

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, pp. 111-12.

Taylor, Reynolds, Woodhouse, and George Keats opposed Brown's authorship, although Woodhouse later endorsed it. Dilke seemed to fluctuate for a time between the parties, but ultimately he cast his lot against Brown.<sup>1</sup> Within six months of his death, Keats's friends present a picture we should gladly efface from the records: the unhappy spectacle of heirs fighting over an estate—in this case, the manuscripts of the poems and letters and the right to make them public. The amazing quality of the performance is that Keats's friends put so high a value on papers which the literary world had deemed of no value. It was as though they were fighting for the best seats in an empty, dark theatre.

The result of this discord among Keats's friends was the silence of the next seven years. The competitive race to collect had succeeded in scattering the material so widely that not one of the group could put together a volume of any completeness. Leigh Hunt was the first in print. In 1828 he published *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, which included his recollections of Keats. Hunt scarcely intended this to be the life of Keats, yet it brought down the criticism of the group upon his head. Brown was annoyed: 'Leigh Hunt's account

<sup>1</sup> George Keats's letters to Dilke, in the Harvard College Library, show that they both disliked and distrusted Brown, and Dilke violently denied Brown's 'generous protection' of Keats in a manuscript note in his copy of Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats*, now in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Dilke's note is written on p. ix of the preface. The version of the note in *Letters* (p. li) contains minor variants and suppresses Dilke's adjective 'crack-brained' describing 'Milnes's distinguished friend of Fiesole', i.e. Landor.



of him is worse than disappointing ; I cannot bear it ; it seems as if Hunt was so impressed by his illness that he had utterly forgotten him in health,' he wrote to Fanny Brawne on December 17, 1829 ;<sup>1</sup> and the same day he wrote Dilke : ' I hate Hunt's account of him, though every sentence, I verily believe, was intended to his honour and fame ; but what does that matter when he manages to make him a whining, puling boy ?'<sup>2</sup>

During these seven years Charles Brown had not considered himself as a possible biographer of his friend. Perhaps his conviction that Keats's brother George had mistreated the poet was in part responsible for his silence. Certainly his animosity towards George cut him off from essential material, and he firmly believed that Keats was not sufficiently valued to warrant either a biography or a monument in England, which Severn repeatedly suggested.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Brown's grief was an ever-present phantom which kept him silent ; his recollections of Keats were too vivid. After the poet went to Italy, he wrote : ' He is present to me everywhere and at all times—he now seems sitting by my side and looking hard in my face ' ;<sup>4</sup> and when Severn sent him the Keats papers, he replied : ' the sight of them will renew many painful thoughts.'<sup>5</sup> He fled the responsibility for

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. lxi.

<sup>2</sup> Fragmentary unpublished letter, Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Brown to Severn, February 7, 1823. Sharp, pp. 134–5.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Brown to Severn, ' some three weeks later ' than December 21, 1820. Sharp, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Brown to Severn, August 14, 1821. Sharp, p. 109.

the very human reason that he could not face the sorrow it would bring him.

As early as September 1821, Severn had written Brown that he was 'the only one to write Keats's Memoir—at least to describe his character'.<sup>1</sup> Similar remarks from other friends finally convinced him of this duty, and at last, late in 1829, Brown set about the task seriously. The immediate incentive was a letter from Galignani in Paris asking for a Keats's autograph. 'I have answered them', wrote Brown, 'in a manner to make them wish for my pen, and Keats's MSS. . . . I am resolved, seeing that Keats is better valued, to write his life.'<sup>2</sup> To Leigh Hunt he wrote:

'You must know I am employing myself in writing Keats's Memoirs, at greater length than your's, and Severn will engrave his portrait from the miniature I have. . . . What I stand in need of is an account of Keats when a school boy; and if I knew C. C. Clarke's address, I would write to him for information on that point. . . . I really think you are bound to induce him to send one, giving all he can of his boyish disposition, and of any thing else while at school; in one word, I want to make out as far as I can, the development of his mind. Both he and Tom have talked a little to me on this subject. . . . Can Clarke tell me in what parish Keats was born? for

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Fragmentary unpublished letter from Brown to Dilke, December 17, 1829, Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum. Brown supplied Galignani with Keats's signature (*Letters*, p. lxi), which was reproduced with an engraving of Severn's sketch of Keats, taken from Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, on the frontispiece of *The Poetical Works of Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats* (Paris, 1829). Galignani's memoir of Keats is obviously based on Hunt's account in *Lord Byron*; all of the biographical facts are found in this source, and they are presented in approximately the same order and sometimes almost verbatim.

I think you have given a wrong birth day, though you have his authority.<sup>1</sup>

Brown also wrote to Severn, who at once promised him all the information in his possession, together with the engraving of the miniature to which Brown referred in the letter to Hunt.

To Dilke Brown gave the following reasons for writing the biography, in a letter dated January 20, 1830:

‘My motive for writing Keats’ life is that he may not continue to be represented as he was not; possibly I ought to add another motive,—that of revenge against Gifford and Lockhart,—aye, and Jeffrey.’<sup>2</sup>

Some weeks later Brown further explained his desire to present Keats as he actually was, and to correct an error of Hunt’s concerning his background.<sup>3</sup>

Brown also wrote to Fanny Brawne, to whom Keats had been engaged: ‘I am resolved to write his life, persuaded that no one, except yourself, knew him better.’<sup>4</sup> He asked her permission to use letters and poems in which she figured importantly. This letter brought disastrous consequences upon Fanny Brawne. One sentence of her reply provided the first sharp-edged weapon with which the critics could attack her. Lifted from its context it became a guillotine with which she was executed publicly

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, June 1, 1830, British Museum. Hunt stated that Keats was born on October 29, 1796 (*Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, second edition, i. 409). Brown was also in ignorance of the date of Keats’s birth, repeating Hunt’s error. See p. 40, below.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter, Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 95, below.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters*, p. lxi.

year after year, for she was quoted as saying that 'the kindest act would be to let him rest for ever in the obscurity to which circumstances have condemned him'.<sup>1</sup> A rough draft of the curiously enigmatic reply, dated December 29, 1829, which Fanny Brawne made to Brown's request has recently come to light; her first reaction was unfavourable, but with some reluctance she gave her consent in the following words:

'... had I been his wife I should have felt my present reluctance would have been so much stronger that I think I must have made it my request that you would relinquish your intention. The only thing that saves me now is that so very few can know I am in any way implicated and that of those few I may hope the greater number may never see the book in Question. Do then entirely as you please and be assured that I comply with your wishes rather because they are yours than with the expectation of any good that can be done. I fear the kindest act would be to let him rest for ever in the obscurity to which unhappy circumstances have condemned him. Will the writings that remain of his rescue him from it? You can tell better than I, and are more impartial on the subject for my wish has long been that his name, his very name could be forgotten by every one—but myself, that I have often wished most intensely.'<sup>2</sup>

*To your publishing his poems addressed to me I do not see*

<sup>1</sup> Lowell, ii. 425. Miss Lowell's reference to this quotation is confused, for she says first that it was a 'remark to Dilke ten years after Keats's death' (i.e. in 1831) and then that 'Fanny Brawne was not referring to Keats's poetry when she wrote this, she was thinking of, and replying to a request made to her by Brown in 1829.'

<sup>2</sup> At this point Fanny Brawne wrote the following statement, which is legible, although she crossed it out, evidently feeling that she had not expressed what she meant: 'I was more generous ten years ago, I should not now endure the odium of being connected with one who was working up his way against poverty and every sort of abuse.'

*there can be any objection* after the subject has been once alluded to, if you think them worthy of him. I entirely agree with you that if his life is to be published no part ought to be kept back for all you can show is his character, his life was too short and too unfortunate for any thing else. I have no doubt that his talents would have been great, not the less for their being developed rather late which I believe they [were], all I fear is whether he has left enough to make people believe that. If I could think so I should consider it right to make that sacrifice to his reputation that I now do to your kind motives. Not that even the establishment of his fame would give me the pleasure it ought.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Brown gained Fanny Brawne's unenthusiastic permission to use the material he wished, little realizing that her reply would deeply prejudice succeeding generations against Keats's fiancée.

The writing of the memoir immediately involved Brown in a quarrel with Dilke. As early as 1824 there had been an exchange of correspondence between these friends in regard to George Keats's discharge of brotherly duties to John. Dilke championed George. But in Brown there was no tolerance for any criticism of John—not even for a remark which reflected upon his ability to handle accounts. Thus, in 1830, when Brown, preparatory to writing his memoir, opened up his packet of Keats's letters and found evidence which he thought undeniable proof of George's unpaid debts to the poet, he took up the issue once more. Impassioned arguments and refutations flew back and

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. lxiii.

forth between Brown and Dilke, generating anger and permanent bad feeling. Brown implied that Dilke's attack was directed against Keats himself and rushed to defend his dead friend with caustic words, writing as follows :

‘Respecting Keats himself, you must excuse me when I say that I think you never rightly understood any thing of him but his poetry. How could you say that, after his illness, he sunk something from his high feelings of generosity ? Why, from the moment he was taken ill, he had not the means of proving his feelings of generosity to the amount of a penny.’<sup>1</sup>

This quarrel gives a pathetic picture of loyalty gone astray. It was the final rift which broke for ever the friendship between Brown and Dilke, a friendship which had endured since childhood.

In the midst of heated arguments about George, Dilke insinuated that Brown was attempting to capitalize upon his friendship with the poet, in prematurely anticipating profits from the memoir. Brown hastened to write Severn, early in 1830 :

‘Dilke urges me, as a proof to the world of my friendship for Keats, and as the only proof that I am not book-making, to declare, from the first, that I will not accept of one penny of the profits which may arise from the Memoirs. I never thought of profit, rather of loss, as I expected to pay a large sum for the engravings.’<sup>2</sup>

He then asked Severn for suggestions concerning the use of the profits, should any materialize.

<sup>1</sup> Fragmentary unpublished letter, p. [redacted] marked February 9, 1830, Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp, p. 161.

Severn's customary enthusiasm ran away with him when he wrote as follows to Brown on April 15, 1830:

'You ask me what shall be done with the profits of our work to poor Keats's memory. Now I have thought a good deal of it, and am going to propose *that we erect a monument to his memory here in Rome* to the full extent of the money arising from the sale of the work. . . . I have a subject in my mind for the Basso Rilievo, which I think I once mentioned to you before. It is Keats sitting with his half-strung lyre—the three Fates arrest him—one catches his arm—another cuts the thread—and the third pronounces his end.'<sup>1</sup>

The energetic diligence with which Brown set out to write the memoirs in 1829 and 1830 seems to have been short-lived. The quarrel with Dilke undoubtedly increased the obstacles in his path. His friends grew impatient. In 1832 Woodhouse exacted a promise from Brown to write the life of Keats during that winter,<sup>2</sup> and Severn was equally pressing, repeating time after time, in his letters to Brown of the early thirties, the question 'What are you doing about Keats's Life?' In 1834 he wrote Brown: '*The time has come, and I FEAR THE TIME MAY PASS.*'<sup>3</sup> He then threatened Brown with writing the memoirs himself. For two years more Brown continued to procrastinate, but at last, on November 26, 1836, he reported to Severn that he was resolved to carry through the task, writing thus from Plymouth:

'The memory of Keats has been one of my greatest

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

pleasures, but lately it has been mixed with pain,—for I have been occupied in writing my life of him, and, consequently, been turning over letters and papers, some full of hope, others of despair, and my mind has been compelled to trace one misfortune to another, all connected with him. I knew this task was my duty, and, from the beginning I had from time to time made, I found it a painful one. Therefore to compel me to my duty, I boldly put down my name at our Institution for a lecture, on 27th December, on “The Life and Poems of John Keats.” Now that it is advertised, the card printed, the members looking forward to it, there is no retreating: it must be done.<sup>1</sup>

This lecture, delivered almost sixteen years after Keats’s death, was the first full-length biography of the poet. At six in the evening, December 27, 1836, the members took their places in the lecture hall of the Plymouth Athenaeum. It was a solemn gathering because the Athenaeum was dedicated to the purpose of regulating the heart under the discipline of religion, so that every accession of knowledge would be an accession of happiness.<sup>2</sup> No random audience awaited the address, for only those gentlemen ‘who undertook to lecture’ were eligible for membership.<sup>3</sup> The published list of members contains only unfamiliar names, except those of Brown and Colonel Hamilton Smith, whom Brown and Severn knew in Italy, but the Honorary List included Benjamin Robert Haydon, the artist, who had been an intimate friend of Keats and a former

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178–9.

<sup>2</sup> *Plymouth Institution Transactions* (London, 1830), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Plymouth Institution, Annual Reports and Transactions* (Plymouth, 1865), i. 8.



resident of Plymouth ; however, he was not present on this noteworthy occasion.<sup>1</sup>

Brown gives us a glimpse of the evening in a letter to Leigh Hunt of June 1837 :

‘I have the “Life” which was read at our own Plymouth Institution in December last. . . . It had a remarkable reception at our Institution ; but, I have been told, less on his account as a poet than on account of its interest as a piece of biography, read by the friend of a young poet—no matter who it was. It also exalted me as his friend, a compliment which I had endeavoured to avoid, but possibly the endeavour had directly the opposite effect of what I intended. Among other parsons Coleridge’s son<sup>2</sup> was there, and he was the only person (as well as parson) present who had *read* his poems,—he was enthusiastic in their praise. There were two parsons, one a regular and the other a dissenter, who angered me a little,—but it was of no importance ;—I paid one in his own coin, and will pay the other by degrees ;—you can well imagine that an exposure of the Tory critics on Keats must necessarily make many a person spiteful.’<sup>3</sup>

Evidently the political discussion superseded the poetical. It is curious that the reception of this first *Life of Keats* should have been almost identical with that accorded *Endymion*. Charles Brown did not have sufficient detachment to see that he was himself responsible ; he had raised the very ghosts he wished to lay.

Brown’s deep disappointment at this outcome is

<sup>1</sup> Haydon’s *Autobiography and Memoirs* contains no information of a departure from London in December 1836.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Derwent Coleridge (1800–83), second son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Master of Helston School, Cornwall, 1825–41.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished letter, in the British Museum.

apparent in his comments to Severn and Hunt. Before presenting the *Life* to the Plymouth Institution, he had written cheerfully to Severn, on November 26, 1836:

‘Probably I shall afterwards print it in a Magazine, there to rest as a voucher for his admirers; possibly I may print it in a small volume by itself; in either shape you must have it.’<sup>1</sup>

But, after the lecture, in his letter to Hunt of June 1837, he wrote:

‘As I conceived it my duty to write it [the *Life of Keats*], I have pleasure in its existence; but my intention of publishing it is not so eager as it was. 1st I must not give his unpublished works, nor can I refer to them effectively till they shall be published; this, however, is not much. 2d By the experience I had at our Institution; and by what I read in the works of the day, I fear that his fame is not yet high enough. 3rd I had rather a cool reply on the subject from Saunders and Otley. And 4th I would almost rather it were published after my death than it should disturb my tranquillity, from attacks, whether against him from his revilers, or against me—for I know not what.’<sup>2</sup>

Brown’s allusion to the fact that he ‘must not give his [Keats’s] unpublished works’ refers to a new turn of events in the quarrel with Dilke and George Keats. Writing to Severn on August 23, 1838, he said:

‘I enter heart and hand into all your good purposes about Keats. You do me injustice in thinking I am remiss or lukewarm. His memoir has been long ready, and I am anxious it should be published. Here are the

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter, in the British Museum.

difficulties in publishing the whole of his poems. Moxon told me that Taylor, like a dog in a manger, will neither give a second edition, nor allow another to give one. But now, I believe, his copyright is out. George Keats threatened anyone with an injunction who should publish the posthumous poems; this indeed stopped me in the intended publication of the Memoir.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1835 it was known to Brown that George Keats had authorized Dilke to enjoin the publication of any of his deceased brother's works. Brown consulted Richard Monckton Milnes, a Keats enthusiast, as to the legality of such an injunction. Although Milnes at first questioned George's power, upon investigation he found that George was acting within his rights.<sup>2</sup> Brown proceeded with his memoir; but to Brown, as to most succeeding biographers, the memoir seemed incomplete without the poems.

For five years following the lecture, the completed *Life of Keats*, in manuscript form, continued to present a problem to Brown: 'I cannot bear the thought of its being printed and received as of little interest except among a few', he wrote to Severn on October 26, 1837.<sup>3</sup> He considered, nevertheless, several plans, such as printing a limited edition of his biography and 'not selling one' copy, or donating the unpublished *Life* and his Keats manuscripts to the British Museum, where they would be available to those who desired them. In 1840 he once more considered publication; he offered the memoir to the *Morning Chronicle*, to be published a column

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, pp. 186-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

at a time. But the London proprietors claimed that it would be a losing speculation, since few readers were interested in poetry or in poets' lives.<sup>1</sup> Again Brown was compelled to realize that the demand for Keats's *Life* after his death was as limited as the interest in Keats's poems during his lifetime.

With 1841 came a new era for Brown and the memoir. In the spring of that year George Keats, waiving his legal rights, agreed to the publication of a 'Memoir, and Literary Remains'.<sup>2</sup> The editor of the *Morning Chronicle* reconsidered his decision and offered to publish Brown's work.<sup>3</sup> But these sudden shifts, ironically enough, came too late for the author, who was on the eve of quitting England. Allured by the glowing promises of the Plymouth Company of New Zealand, Brown decided to emigrate to that remote colony. His son was sailing in March, and Brown booked his own passage on the following ship.<sup>4</sup>

Brown had no intention of taking away from England the Keats papers and manuscripts which had been entrusted to his care. He was therefore obliged to find the right person to carry out his plans for placing Keats in the forefront of English poets, and after lengthy deliberation he selected Richard Monckton Milnes. Brown considered each

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, Brown to Milnes, October 25, 1840, Collection of Lord Crewe.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished letter, Brown to Milnes, March 14, 1841, Collection of Lord Crewe.

<sup>4</sup> *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal*, March 25, 1841.

of Keats's friends in turn for this office. He thought seriously of sponsoring John Hamilton Reynolds's long-deferred biography; and he considered Leigh Hunt, who had already dealt briefly with Keats in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*. He dismissed Benjamin Bailey because of his residence in Ceylon, where he had become the Archdeacon of Colombo, and rejected as unqualified Edward Holmes, Joseph Severn, and Richard Woodhouse.<sup>1</sup> Brown's animosity for Dilke removed him as the possible author, as well as George Keats and John Taylor. In the end Brown chose a man who had never known Keats. He gave the reasons for his choice in a few words written to Severn on March 21, 1841; 'Mr. Milnes is a poet himself,' he said, 'an admirer of Keats and, in my mind, better able to sit in judgment on a selection for publication than any other man I know.'<sup>2</sup>

Brown's knowledge of Milnes's qualification was in no way superficial, for a friendship of some seven or eight years had existed between these men. Brown had been introduced to Milnes at Fiesole, probably in 1833, by his friend Walter Savage Landor.<sup>3</sup> Milnes had been a member of the distinguished circle at Trinity College, Cambridge, which included Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam; apart from Keats's friends, this group of under-

<sup>1</sup> Sharp, pp. 194-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> The dedication of Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* is dated August 1, 1848. The first sentence of the preface is as follows: 'It is now fifteen years ago that I met, at the villa of my distinguished friend Mr. Landor, on the beautiful hill-side of Fiesole, Mr. Charles Brown.'

graduates in the late 1820's was one of the first to recognize his great genius. Milnes's enthusiasm for Keats made his chance meeting with Brown a momentous occasion. Brown responded readily to the young man who held Keats in such high esteem, and a friendship developed which strengthened with the years. Brown had turned to Milnes for legal advice when he first heard of George Keats's injunction against the publication of Keats's poems, and Milnes had been among those who encouraged Brown to finish his memoir and to publish this life of the poet. Consequently, on March 14, 1841, Brown wrote to Milnes that he wished 'to confide in a true lover of Keats' and to entrust the publication of the *Life and Poems* to him. 'Such confidence I am ready to impose in you,' he wrote, 'if you will undertake the task—the responsibility—the gratification—or whatever you may be induced to call it. . . . Should you consent to accept of the *trust*, I will send you the Deeds.'<sup>1</sup>

Milnes must have accepted the suggestion at once, since four days later Brown wrote that he was sending the *Life* and the manuscripts of the poems. In the midst of his preparations for departure, Brown seems to have revised the memoir; his letters to Milnes show the mental difficulties he encountered in preparing his data for the new biographer. On March 19 he wrote:

'Yesterday and today I have been occupied on this

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, Collection of Lord Crewe.

subject, and became fevered and nervous. I feel myself quite unable to fix my attention on these papers, whether in my handwriting or in his, any longer."<sup>1</sup>

He soon wrote again in a similar vein, saying:

'As soon as I begin to be occupied with his [Keats's] poems, or with the *Life* I have written, it forcibly seems to me, against all reason (that is out of the question) that he is sitting by my side, his eyes seriously wandering from me to the papers by turns, and watching my doings. Call it nervousness if you will; but with this nervous impression I am unable to do justice to his fame. Could he speak I would abide by his decision."<sup>2</sup>

These statements are disarming. Any criticism of the biographer who knew Keats so intimately must be tempered by sympathy for the friend whose affection remained at such high pitch twenty years after the poet's death.

In spite of this mitigation, Charles Brown's *Life* is a disappointment. Its weakness results from the fact that Brown wrote not so much a biography of Keats as an invective aimed at those whom he considered responsible for his friend's untimely end, namely, at the critics and George Keats. He attacked the critics openly, but denounced George Keats only by implication as one of those who failed Keats in the last period of his life. To make these enemies suffer the more, Brown strongly felt that Keats's long, painful illness 'should not be concealed, should not be less dwelt upon'.<sup>3</sup>

Time seemed to crystallize rather than soften

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, Collection of Lord Crewe.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., March 19, 1841.

Brown's bitterness. In entrusting his *Life* to Milnes, he chiefly requested him to 'allow my facts and opinions to stand'.<sup>1</sup> His two obsessions were still George Keats and the critics. He had spared George Keats in his memoir, but he could not refrain from pouring out his contempt to Milnes. He repeated several times George's words to Keats upon leaving for America in 1820, after his brief return to England: 'You, John, have so many friends, they will be sure to take care of you', together with Keats's comment: 'That was not, Brown, fair—was it?'<sup>2</sup> He also emphasized to Milnes the cruelty of 'brute public opinion' which, insidiously working itself into Keats's mind, became the poet's final estimate of himself as he chose his epitaph, 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.' Brown's indignation at the reviewers who prompted this opinion knew no bounds; he was firm with Milnes, saying: 'I would have no words changed that would change their purport.'<sup>3</sup> It was the intensity of this single emotion which, monopolizing Charles Brown's mind, drove out the wealth of anecdotes and incidents which he must have known about Keats.

And yet, in this late consideration of Brown's memoir, we find no more important point than his insistence upon the disastrous effects of unfair criticism on Keats. Recent biographers have dismissed the theory, widely popularized because it is the key-note of *Adonais*, that Keats was killed by the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., April 9, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., March 29, 1841.



critics, and have pointed to his own words to show that he was untouched by the cruel pettiness of his attackers. 'My own domestic criticism', he wrote to Hessey on October 9, 1818, 'has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict, and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception & ratification of what is fine.'<sup>1</sup>

This statement was undoubtedly true in the autumn of 1818, but the evidence of Brown and nine other friends of Keats shows that the poet regarded his attackers very differently as his adversities increased. Although the eighty critical notices of Keats's works 'were preponderantly friendly and encouraging rather than inimical',<sup>2</sup> the bitterest attacks were published in two of the most influential periodicals, and the scoffing remarks of *Blackwood* and *The Quarterly* greatly curtailed the sales of Keats's books, just at the time when his inherited income disappeared. During his illness of 1820, he undoubtedly brooded on this injustice, which robbed him of revenue and forced him to postpone all thoughts of marriage. The mental anguish of this period reacted most unfavourably on his physical condition and retarded even the temporary recovery from his first tubercular attack.

It was tuberculosis, of course, which killed

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> G. L. Marsh and N. I. White, 'Keats and the Periodicals of His Time', *Modern Philology*, xxxii (August 1934), 51.

Keats. In any case he probably would have died from it, as did his mother, brothers, and four nieces and nephews,<sup>1</sup> for the debilitating treatment of the disease was exactly counter to modern medical practice. But his mental condition, irritated almost beyond endurance, must have hastened the progress of his illness. The critical attacks were the starting-point for his melancholia; they therefore must be regarded, as Brown said, as important contributory causes of his death.

Brown's opinion was shared by Fanny Brawne, George Keats, Bailey, Reynolds, Haydon, Dilke, Hunt, Taylor, and Woodhouse—in short, by all of Keats's intimate friends who expressed an opinion on the subject except Clarke and Severn.

To his fiancée Keats probably opened his heart during his illness. Fanny Brawne's testimony on the subject is repeated in the letter of her acquaintance, Gerald Griffin, to his sister Lucy, of June 21, 1825; he wrote:

'Keats you must know was in love, and the lady whom he was to have married had he survived Gifford's (the butcher) review, attended him to the last. She is a beautiful young creature, but now wasted away to a skeleton, and will follow him shortly I believe. She and his sister say they have oft found him on suddenly entering the room, with that review in his hand, reading as if he would devour it—completely absorbed—absent and drinking it in like mortal poison. The instant he observed anybody

<sup>1</sup> 'Of George Keats's children, two became victims [of tuberculosis], and two grandchildren also developed it.' Lowell, i. 514.

near him however, he would throw it by, and begin to talk of some indifferent matter.<sup>1</sup>

Fanny Brawne's own statement of this opinion is found in her letter to Fanny Keats of February 1, 1821, written on learning from Severn of Keats's desperate plight in Rome a month before his death :

'Good God! is it to be borne that he [Keats], formed for every thing good, and, I think I dare say it, for every thing great, is to give up his hopes of life and happiness, so young too, and to be murdered, for that is the case, by the mere malignity of the world, joined to want of feeling in those who ought above all to have felt for him.'<sup>2</sup>

In his letters to Dilke, George Keats (whom Fanny Brawne, like Brown, included in her denunciation) frequently referred to the tragic effect of the critical attacks on his brother. On April 10, 1824, he wrote :

'Blackwood's magazine has fallen into my hands, I could have walked 100 miles to have dirked him à l'Americaine, for his cruelly associating John in the Cockney school, and other blackguardisms, [whi]ch paltry ridicule will have wounded deeper than the severe[st] criticism particularly as he regarded what is termed the Cockney of the coterie with so much disgust. He either knew John well and touched him in the tenderest place purposely, or knew nothing of him and supposed he went all lengths with the set in their festering opinions and cockney affectations.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Gerald Griffin Esq. by his Brother*, [Daniel Griffin], London, 1843, p. 190. Edmund Blunden first commented on this passage in 'Keats Letters, 1931; Marginalia', *Studies in English Literature*, vol. xi, no. 4 (October 1931), Tokyo. It is quoted in *Letters*, p. lx.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Fanny Brawne to Fanny Keats* (ed. F. Edgcumbe, 1936), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished letter, in the Harvard College Library.

He repeated the charge on April 20, 1825, writing:

‘After all Blackwood and the Quarterly associated with our family disease Consumption were ministers of death sufficiently venomous, cruel and deadly to have consigned one of less sensibility to a premature grave, I have consumed many many hours in devising means to punish these literary gladiators, but am always brought to the vexing conclusion that they are invulnerable to one of my prowess.’<sup>1</sup>

Again, on May 7, 1830, George wrote to Dilke:

‘I do not see how a life of John can be written without noticing the effect that severe reviews and abominable personal reflections had upon his sensitive mind, it ought to be done temperately not for the purpose of cutting at those worthies and exciting their spleen, but as circumstances that surrounded and operated upon the mind and body of the Poet.’<sup>2</sup>

Bailey and Reynolds, like Fanny Brawne, felt that *Blackwood’s* gibes were almost murderous. On learning of Keats’s death, Bailey wrote to Taylor, on March 26, 1821:

‘Reynolds told me, when I was last in London, that poor Keats attributed his approaching end to the poisonous pen of Lockhart. If it be so, here is one more victim of that “insatiable ardor,” of the envenomed arrows of awfully [illegible word] and unjust criticism.’<sup>3</sup>

On March 29, 1821, Haydon wrote:

‘He [Keats] began life full of hopes, fiery impetuous

<sup>1</sup> From the holograph, in the Harvard College Library. Most of the letter was given by Milnes (p. 195), with certain inaccuracies.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter, in the Harvard College Library.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished letter, in the Woodhouse Commonplace Book, Morgan Library.

and ungovernable, expecting the world to fall at once beneath his powers. Poor fellow! his genius had no sooner begun to bud than hatred and malice spat their poison on its leaves, and sensitive and young it shrivelled beneath their effusions.<sup>1</sup>

He added, with undoubted exaggeration, that Keats 'flew to dissipation as a relief', but his opinion on the effect of the unfair reviews substantially agrees with what other friends wrote.

Dilke also felt that the critical attacks hastened Keats's death, but, unlike Brown, he chose to disregard them, for he believed (erroneously, as it developed) that a formal defence of Keats would call forth more vilification. He wrote as follows to Severn, in a letter dated 'Sunday Evening. 1841':

'To be sure, Brown promised further to vindicate John from the attacks in the "Quarterly" and "Blackwood" —then [*thus?*] to drag his memory through the mire that had poisoned his living existence. As if the fact that an edition of his works were called for a quarter of a century after he had been laid in his grave, was not vindication enough. As if the monument to his fame would be more genial in its influences if built up with the stones that had been hurled at his living head.'<sup>2</sup>

Hunt reprimanded Byron for his couplet from *Don Juan* on Keats:

Strange that the mind, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

Byron refused to give up his rhyme, although Hunt 'told him he was mistaken in attributing Mr.

<sup>1</sup> *The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, edited from his journals by Tom Taylor, [1926], i. 301.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp, pp. 199-200.

Keats's death to the critics, though they had perhaps hastened, and certainly embittered it'.<sup>1</sup> Hunt described Keats's 'constitutional tendency to consumption', which was greatly aggravated when 'the rascally critics came up, and roused an indignation in him, both against them and himself, which he could ill afford to endure'. Hunt's discussion of the 'Cockney School' essays contains further information on Keats's disastrous indignation. Hunt was at first inclined to treat the anonymous attacks with dignified silence, but later, he said, he was forced to notice them.

'Circumstances then induced me to make a more peremptory call: it was not answered; and the two parties retreated,—they to their meanness, and I into my contempt. I have since regretted, on Mr. Keats's account, that I did not take a more active part. The scorn which the public and they would feel for one another, before long, was evident enough; but, in the meantime, an injury, in every point of view, was done to a young and sensitive nature, to which I ought to have been more alive. The truth was, I never thought about it; nor, I believe, did he, with a view to my taking any farther notice. I was in the habit, though a public man, of living in a world of abstractions of my own, and I regarded him as a nature still more abstracted, and sure of unsought renown. Though a politician, (such as I was,) I had scarcely a political work in my library. Spensers and Arabian Tales filled up the shelves, as they do now; and Spenser himself was not a remoter spirit in my eyes, from all the commonplaces of life, than my new friend. Our whole talk was made up of idealisms. In the

<sup>1</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, second edition, London, 1828, i. 488-9.

streets we were in the thick of the old woods. I little suspected at that time, as I did afterwards, that the hunters had struck him; that a delicate organization, which already anticipated a premature death, made him feel his ambition thwarted by these fellows; and that the very impatience of being impatient was resented by him, and preyed on his mind. Had he said but a word to me on the subject, I would have kept no measures with them.<sup>1</sup>

According to George Keats, his brother would not have welcomed Hunt's active and public championship. After he had read *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, George wrote to Dilke, on May 12, 1828:

'Hunt's sketch is not altogether a failure but I should be extremely sorry that poor John's name should go down to posterity associated with the littleness of L. H., an association of which he was so impatient in his lifetime. He speaks of him patronizingly, that he would have defended him against the Reviewers if he had known his nervous irritation at this abuse of him; and says that on that point only he was reserved to him; the fact was he more dreaded Hunt's defence than their abuse—you know all this as well as I do.'<sup>2</sup>

Taylor's opinion on the question has already been quoted.<sup>3</sup> He believed that the blow which 'Blackwood's Men' dealt Keats was as deadly as the shot fired at John Scott in the duel which grew from the 'Cockney School' articles.

The final evidence on the deep effect of these attacks is in Keats's own words, as recorded by

<sup>1</sup> Leigh Hunt, *op. cit.*, i. 425-6.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter, in the Harvard College Library.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 5, above.

Woodhouse in his manuscript 'Notes by Keats':  
'If I die you must ruin Lockhart.'<sup>1</sup>

Shelley never knew Keats well, and his testimony on the subject, incorporated in *Adonais* and its preface, is not the same important first-hand evidence as the opinions which have been quoted from nine of Keats's intimate friends. Four of these opinions were written no later than six weeks after Keats died; except for Dilke's, which dates from 1841, all of the rest were written within ten years of his death. Because they are the contemporary testimony of Keats's closest friends, they must be accepted at their face value, for against them can be placed only two bits of evidence, written forty years after Keats's death by men whose memories were frequently inaccurate.

Clarke, who saw little of Keats after 1818,<sup>2</sup> discussed the unfair attacks as follows:

'To say that these disgusting misrepresentations did not affect the consciousness and self-respect of Keats would be to underrate the sensitiveness of his nature. He felt the insult, but more the injustice of the treatment he had received; he told me so, as we lay awake one night, when I slept in his brother's bed. They had injured him in the most wanton manner; but if they, or my Lord Byron, ever for one moment supposed that he was crushed or even cowed in spirit by the treatment he had received, never were they more deluded. "Snuffed

<sup>1</sup> Woodhouse Commonplace Book, Morgan Library. Colvin (p. 521), publishing this statement without indicating its source, said that Keats addressed it to Reynolds.

<sup>2</sup> Keats's last reference to Clarke is found in his letter to George and Georgiana Keats of February 14, 1819, when he wrote: 'I have not seen . . . C. C. C. for God knows when.' (*Letters*, p. 298.)



out by an article," indeed! He had infinitely more magnanimity, in its fullest sense, than that very spoiled, self-willed, and mean-souled man,—and I have authority for the last term.<sup>1</sup>

Clarke's contradiction of the popular theory lacks the definiteness of Severn's statement:

'In Italy he [Keats] always shrank from speaking in direct terms of the actual things which were killing him. Certainly the "Blackwood" attack was one of the least of his miseries, for he never even mentioned it to me.'<sup>2</sup>

We see, therefore, that Brown's opinion, clearly indicated in his letters to Milnes and throughout his memoir, is the authenticated opinion of most of Keats's friends rather than the unsubstantiated belief of recent biographers. Brown felt the injustice and the disaster of the attacks so deeply that he returned to the subject time after time, emphasizing the point even to the exclusion of personal recollections.

An indication of the anecdotes Brown might have written is found in his comment to Milnes concerning Keats's unfinished poem 'The Cap and

<sup>1</sup> 'Recollections of Keats. By an Old School-Fellow', *The Atlantic Monthly*, vii (January 1861), 96. Clarke paraphrased these remarks in his *Recollections of Writers* (1878), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Severn, 'On the Vicissitudes of Keats's Fame', *The Atlantic Monthly*, xi (April 1863), 402. Reprinted in Sharp, p. 66. Fanny Brawne's statement, made in 1821 (see p. 28), contradicts Severn's of 1868. Further question of Severn's accuracy arises in the fact that he authorized the inscription on Keats's tombstone: 'This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet who, on his death bed, in the bitterness of his heart, at the malicious power of his enemies, desired these words to be engraven on his tomb stone "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."' February 24th, 1821.'

Bells', for which the poet planned to use the pseudonym Lucy Vaughan Lloyd:

"'Lucy Vaughan Lloyd" was written chiefly for amusement; it appeared to be a relaxation; and it was begun without framing laws in his mind for the supernatural. When I noticed certain startling contradictions, his answer used to be—"Never mind, Brown; all those matters will be properly harmonized, before we divide it into Cantos."<sup>1</sup>

Brown gave one other slight glimpse of Keats in telling Milnes of his independent spirits:

"His absolute disgust, his horror at what he used to call "shabby and glutinous cares" was joined to a firm spirit of independence. My earnest offers pained him, because he feared for me. When I have put it in this way—"I am certain, Keats, that it would prove a capital speculation for me, if you will agree to let me go in your boat; I risk nothing, for we shall be sure to have a prosperous voyage," he would look serious, and pleased; but, when it came to the point, he would more seriously refuse to let me enter his boat with—"No, that must not be; you were very well before you knew me; and so you must remain—you are not a bookseller!"<sup>2</sup>

These fragments are sketchy, yet sufficient to touch off our desire for still more. Had Charles Brown been less a champion, he would have been more a biographer.

Leaving these few tantalizing impressions, together with his final requests of Milnes, Charles Brown sailed away to New Zealand, where his own untimely death occurred in June 1842. Richard

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, Brown to Milnes, March 29, 1841, Collection of Lord Crewe.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Monckton Milnes, later Lord Houghton, became sole heir not only to the Keats manuscripts and to the Brown memoir, but to the responsibility of introducing John Keats to the literary world. George Keats died a few months after Brown. The passing of these two men gave Milnes the freedom to rise above petty quarrels and personal animosities, and to lift the detailed facts of a man's life into a poet's biography. The result is the first published biography of Keats, the *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains*, edited by Milnes in 1848.

Milnes used the Brown memoir freely in writing his life of Keats; with discrimination and a sense for dramatic narrative he disentangled the real John Keats from Brown's impassioned diatribe on the critics. Brown's manuscript remained with the other Keatsiana (referred to by Sir Sidney Colvin and Miss Amy Lowell as the Houghton Papers), where it has always been available to students and admirers of Keats. It came into the possession of the Marquis of Crewe, by whose kind permission we are enabled to publish it.

We take pleasure also in acknowledging the kindness and assistance of Miss Ida Corbett, Lord Crewe's secretary; of Mr. M. Buxton Forman, the editor of Keats's letters; of Mr. Edmund Blunden and Mr. Fred Edgcumbe; of the officers of the Harvard College Library, the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, the British Museum, and the Keats Museum; and of the authors to whom separate acknowledgements are made in the notes.

Lord Crewe, like his father, Lord Houghton, has always been most generous in placing his collection at the service of scholars. The information in Brown's memoir has thus been widely known for many years. Mr. H. Buxton Forman and Sir Sidney Colvin (to mention only the two leading English biographers of Keats) both had access to the memoir. No new information on Keats, therefore, will be disclosed in this first publication of Brown's *Life of John Keats*.

Nevertheless, the memoir, as a document in itself, is of the first importance. It gives the only complete picture of Keats written by an intimate friend and greatly surpasses the reminiscences of the poet written by Hunt, Clarke, and Severn, none of whom was closely in touch with Keats during his greatest period. Hunt and Clarke were friends of his youth, and Severn was the magnificently loyal friend of his decline; Brown, however, was one of Keats's most intimate friends in the few years of his prime. The fact that it is the first biography of the poet increases the interest in Brown's memoir, but its greatest importance to Keats scholars and enthusiasts lies in its cogent revelation of the author's character and his relationship with his friend. Finally, its unique quality is derived from its value as a human experience; it throws us back into the personal jealousies and the petty animosities of the poet's friends and critics so that we live in the early nineteenth century. To quarrel with Keats's 'revilers', even

to hate for a few moments with Charles Brown, creates a proximity to Keats which no later biographer has recaptured. To quote Brown himself, 'When a silent man once begins to speak, he is sometimes apt to make up for lost time'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles Armitage Brown, *Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems*, London, 1838, p. v.

Nº 1

~~LIFE AND POEMS OF~~  
JOHN KEATS

by

CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN

---

'He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
His voice in all her music; from the moan  
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;  
He is a presence to be felt and known  
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;  
Which wields the world with never wearied love,  
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness  
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear  
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there  
All new successions to the forms they wear.'

Shelley's 'Adonais', St. 42 & 43.

THESE lines are from 'Adonais', an elegy by Shelley on the death of Keats. When 'Adonais' was sent to me from Italy, I recognized, in these lines, my own every day, involuntary inevitable reflections on the loss of my friend. I honoured the genius that could embody them in language so soothing and poetical; and I eagerly desired, when on my road to Italy, to hold Shelley's hand in mine, for I had never met him,—but he too, a few

days before my arrival in the very city where he had resided for years, was lost.<sup>1</sup>

Often have I been urged to write a biography of Keats, and almost as often have I urged a promise of every information in my power to others. Earnestly wishing it done, I have myself recoiled from the office; for it is painful. He was dearly beloved, and honoured as a superior being by me. Now that twenty years<sup>2</sup> have passed since I lost him, his memory is still my chief happiness; because I think of him in the feeling of Shelley's lines. But, when I must, while writing his life, recal, during our intimate and unreserved friendship, his disappointment, his sorrows, and his death, each crowded with images and circumstances, which force themselves on my mind, the pain well nigh overcomes my duty.<sup>3</sup> For it is a duty; and, since it seems to devolve on me, I will perform it. His fame is part of my life. Indignation at his enemies, with contempt for their listeners, has been another cause of my having deferred this task; but now, it is true, the best and the greater part of his literary countrymen have learnt to feel delight in his poetry.<sup>4</sup>

John Keats was born in Moorfields on 29th October 1796\*.<sup>5</sup> His father was a native of Devonshire,

\* I cannot be certain of this date. While I was in Italy, and since my return, friends have in vain endeavoured to discover the registry of his baptism. One of his schoolfellows<sup>6</sup> informs me that he thinks Keats must have been born a year earlier. The year of his birth I calculate from what he himself casually said of his age; but I suspect that his birthday, from his dislike to having it *kept*, is not correctly given, though said to have been given by himself to a lady,<sup>7</sup> who asked him the question, with an avowed purpose of *keeping it*.

and married a daughter of the proprietor of an inn.<sup>8</sup> At the age of eight or nine years Keats lost his father; and, while he was yet a boy, his mother also died.<sup>9</sup> He was the eldest of three sons and a daughter.<sup>10</sup> Property in the funds to the amount of about £10,000 was bequeathed among them; £2,000 to each of the brothers, and the remainder to the sister.<sup>11</sup>

He was educated at the Rev<sup>d</sup> <sup>12</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Clarke's school at Enfield, and afterwards apprenticed to M<sup>r</sup> Hammond, a surgeon, in Church Street, Edmonton.<sup>13</sup> Owing to his early removal from the school, he felt a deficiency in the latin language; and therefore, during his apprenticeship, made and carefully wrote out a literal prose translation of the whole of Virgil's *Æneid*. At that time also he studied his own language with all the critical nicety in his power, and made himself, for his age, learned in history. After the usual term of years with M<sup>r</sup> Hammond, he became a student at Guy's Hospital; where he was indefatigable in his application to anatomy, medicine, and natural history.

Though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. Before this period his leisure hours, which were ~~scanty~~ few, had not been occupied in reading works of imagination; neither had he attempted, nor thought of writing a single line.<sup>14</sup> In one whose passions were vivid, whose imagination was unbounded, and who, not many months after, was ~~entirely~~ absorbed in poetry, it is strange that no



indication of his powers should have appeared at the first burst of youth. Other and opposite studies, pursued with an eager temperament, may partly, but, perhaps, not wholly account for it. From his earliest boyhood he had an acute sense of beauty, whether in a flower, a tree, the sky, or the animal world; how was it that his sense of beauty did not naturally seek in his mind for images by which he could best express his feelings? It was the 'Faery Queen' that awakened his genius.<sup>15</sup> In Spenser's fairy land he was enchanted, breathed in a new world, and became another being; till, enamoured of the stanza, he attempted to imitate it, and succeeded. This account of the sudden developement of his poetic powers I first received from his brothers, and afterwards from himself. This his ~~first~~ earliest attempt, the 'Imitation of Spenser', is ~~published~~ in his first volume of Poems, and is peculiarly interesting to those who are acquainted with its history.<sup>16</sup>

'Now morning from her orient chamber came,  
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill; &c.'

If any youth, after repeated trials of his strength, were to produce verses worthy to compete with these, who would not hold forth his hand to him, and whose heart would not throb with fear at what he might endure?

From this moment he began, deeply and fervently, to read and ponder over our poets. Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare were his household gods. When his soul arose into poetry, it was imbued

with our earliest authors. ~~He at once relinquished~~ He did not immediately relinquish his profession; for this decisive step was not taken till about two years afterwards, some time before May 1817, when he wrote from Canterbury to one of his brothers,—‘I have forgotten all surgery.’<sup>17</sup> He has assured me the muse had no influence over him in his determination, he being compelled, by conscientious motives alone, to quit the profession, upon discovering that he was unfit to perform a surgical operation. He ascribed his inability to an overwrought apprehension of every possible chance of doing evil in the wrong direction of the instrument. ‘My last operation’, he told me, ‘was the opening of a man’s temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety; but, reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again.’<sup>18</sup>

Some of his poems were shown, by a friend,<sup>19</sup> to Mr Leigh Hunt, at that time editor of the ‘Examiner’, who was instantly aware of their great merit, and their promise of excellence from the young poet.<sup>20</sup> This, together with praise from many others, induced him to prepare for the press a small volume, which appeared in the spring of 1817;<sup>21</sup> and, while it was publishing, he had written the first book of ‘Endymion’.

In the latter part of that year’s summer I first saw him. It was on the Hampstead road that we were introduced to each other; the minutest

circumstances attending our first meeting are strong in my memory, but they must be uninteresting to others all except myself. Still, as in that interview of a minute I inwardly desired his acquaintanceship, if not his friendship, I will take this occasion of describing his personal appearance. He was small in stature, well proportioned, compact in form, and, though thin, rather muscular;—one of the many who prove that manliness is distinct from height and bulk. There is no magic equal to that of an ingenuous countenance, and I never beheld any human being's so ingenuous as his. His full fine eyes were lustrously intellectual, and beaming (at that time!) with hope and joy. It has been remarked that the most faulty feature was his mouth;<sup>22</sup> and, at intervals, it was so. But, whenever he spoke, or was, in any way, excited, the expression of the lips was so varied and delicate, that they might be called handsome.

He had taken lodgings for himself and his brothers at Hampstead, and I was his neighbour. I succeeded in making him come often to my house by never asking him to come oftener; and I let him feel himself at perfect liberty there, chiefly by avoiding to assure him of the fact. We quickly became intimate.

Every one who met him sought for his society, and he was surrounded by a little circle of hearty friends. While 'Endymion' was in progress, as some degree of solitude was necessary, he made excursions to Box Hill, Hastings, the Isle of Wight,

Oxford, and lastly Teignmouth,<sup>23</sup> whither he went to attend on his youngest brother, whose ill state of health required a mild air, and whence the last book of 'Endymion' was forwarded for the press. At times he relieved himself from continued application to this work by writing sonnets and other short poems, most of which have been printed; but among them is one,—'Lines on seeing a lock of Milton's hair', which is yet unknown, and ought not to be so.<sup>24</sup>

Immediately on the appearance of his first volume 'Blackwood's Magazine' commenced a series of attacks upon him, month after month.<sup>25</sup> These attacks doubtless originated and were carried on in unprincipled party spirit.<sup>26</sup> The inexperienced Keats, without a thought of the consequence, in a political point of view, had addressed his volume to his friend ~~M<sup>r</sup>~~ Leigh Hunt in a dedicatory sonnet; and, still less to be forgiven, he had written another sonnet on the day ~~M<sup>r</sup>~~ Leigh Hunt left prison, where he had been confined for two years, in expiation of what had been construed into a disloyal libel.<sup>27</sup> There was no indication of criticism in 'Blackwood's Magazine' on Keats's works; there was nothing but abuse and ridicule to prevent their sale. An author's person, however objectionable, cannot have any thing to do with a question on his literary merits. These hirelings, however, pretended to think otherwise; and, in order to hold him up to public ridicule, they dealt unreservedly in falsehood. They represented him as affected,

effeminate, and ~~also~~ sauntering about without a neckcloth, in imitation of the portrait of Spenser;<sup>28</sup> every word of which was as far from the truth as their jokes on 'pimple-faced Hazlitt',<sup>29</sup> one whom I never saw with a pimple on his face. Hazlitt himself remarked to me,—'Of what use would it be were I publicly to convict them of untruth in this description of me?—of none whatever. They would then persuade their readers, far more to blame than themselves, that in their misrepresentation consisted the very marrow, the excellence of the jest;—nay, that the jest would be nothing if it were true.'<sup>30</sup> The power of these writers, with their unremitting ridicule was great, for they had talent. Mr Lockhart, the son in law of Sir Walter Scott, was generally known as the editor of 'Blackwood's Magazine' at that time.<sup>31</sup> At a later period indeed he denied he was the editor; but he refused to deny that he ever had been the editor.

As quickly as possible after the publication of 'Endymion' an article appeared on it in the 'Quarterly Review'. In this there was nothing but rage and malice, too undisguised, I thought at the time, to prove injurious, and utterly unrecommended by talent of any kind.<sup>32</sup> Still the high reputation of the work, in which it stood, carried it, in spite of its demerits, safe into the public's ear. The public could not suspect that Mr Gifford<sup>33</sup> would compromise the character of the 'Quarterly' by an untenable decided condemnation. How few are at the trouble of forming their own judgment on a

book!—in this exists the power of a reviewer. Shelley, in his preface to 'Adonais', asks,—'As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its 'defects, to be treated contemptuously by those 'who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, *Paris*, and *Woman*, and 'a *Syrian Tale*, and M<sup>rs</sup> Lafanu and M<sup>r</sup> Barrett, 'and M<sup>r</sup> Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure ?'<sup>34</sup> This question from Shelley may be unanswerable ; yet still the 'Quarterly Review' is read with confidence by a large portion of the public, those who cannot or will not exert their faculties or their courage to form an opinion of their own.

As an antidote to this poison we naturally looked forward to the 'Edinburg Review'. M<sup>r</sup> Jeffrey,<sup>35</sup> however, remained and continued to remain silent ; as if quietly watching whether the victim was crushed, or could possibly survive. At length, too late for a good purpose, not till August 1820, after the publication of a third volume,<sup>36</sup> when Keats had received his death-blow,<sup>37</sup> there appeared in the 'Edinburg Review' a criticism on his poems, from which criticism I select the following passages. 'Any one who would represent the whole poem' (*Endymion*) 'as despicable, must either have no 'notion of poetry, or no regard to truth.'—'He 'who does not find ~~in it~~ a great deal in it to admire 'and to give delight, cannot in his heart see much 'beauty in the two exquisite dramas to which 'we have already alluded,' (Fletcher's *Faithful*

*Shepherdess*, and Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd*), 'or find 'any great pleasure in some of the finest creations 'of Milton and Shakespeare'.—'We are very much 'inclined indeed to add, that we do not know any 'book which we would sooner employ as a test to 'ascertain whether any one had in him a native 'relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its 'intrinsic charm.'<sup>38</sup>

Mr Jeffrey, in apology for not having, during the two previous years, noticed a young poet, whom he at last so highly eulogized, chose to make use of this assertion;—'We had never happened to see either of these volumes till very lately.'<sup>39</sup> Reviewers are accustomed to say any thing at their will and pleasure; yet, unless we doubt the gentleman's assertion, we are compelled to accuse the critic, (which would be irreparable disgrace), of having neglected his self assumed duty as a careful examiner into the literature of the day.

In the summer of 1818 Keats offered to be my companion in a walking visit to the English lakes and the highlands of Scotland.<sup>40</sup> We first went by coach to Liverpool,<sup>41</sup> as his brother George was about to embark from that port for America, and thence to Lancaster, from which town we commenced our walk,<sup>42</sup> each with a knapsack on his back. I cannot forget the joy, the rapture of my friend when he suddenly, and for the first time, became sensible to the full effect of mountain scenery. It was just before our descent to the village of Bowness, at a turn of the road, when the lake of Winder-

mere at once came into view.<sup>43</sup> In the evening he repeated to me his beautiful and pathetic poem of 'Isabella', which he had just written, before he left Teignmouth. All was enchantment to us both.

He had been introduced to Wordsworth in London, and, to show respect to that great poet, he called on him at Rydale;<sup>44</sup> but it was at the time of a general election, and therefore Wordsworth was away from his quiet home, at Lowther Hall.<sup>45</sup> ~~The young poet looked thoughtful at this exposure of his elder.~~

After having made something like the usual to[ur]<sup>46</sup> through Westmoreland and Cumberland, we journied by coach from Carlisle to Dumfries, where we stood before the grave of Burns.<sup>47</sup> Then, as we walked, ~~through~~ by Solway Firth, through that delightful part of Kirkcudbrightshire, the scene of 'Guy Mannering', I talked of Meg Merrilies, while Keats, who had not yet read that [nove]l, was much interested in the character. 'There' was [a] little spot, close to our path-way,—'There', he said, in an instant positively realizing a creation of the novelist, 'in that very spot, without a shadow of doubt, has old Meg Merrilies often boiled her 'kettle!' It was among pieces of rock, and brambles, and broom, ornamented with a profusion of honeysuckle, wild roses, and foxglove, all in the very blush and fullness of blossom. While we sat at breakfast, he was occupied in writing to his young sister, and, for her amusement, he composed a ballad on old Meg. I took a copy of it at the time.



It was for the amusement of a school-girl ; yet how full of imagination !

Old Meg she was a gipsy &c.<sup>48</sup>

Want of time to effect our numerous intentions, with other circumstances, compelled us to forego seeing the Giant's Cause-way, though we had proceeded towards it as far as Belfast.<sup>49</sup> On our return, walking northwards by the coast, Ailsa rock attracted our continued notice. It seemed, at our first view, the sun shining on it, like an enormous transparent tortoise asleep upon calm water. Its height is 940 feet, measured on its perpendicular side, above the level of the sea. Walking onward, we saw, as it were, the shoulders of this rock ; then, as we still walked on, we saw more and more, with the mountains of Arran behind, the whole extent of Cantire, and even Ireland like a little dusky cloud in the horizon. At [ou]r inn in Girvan he wrote this Sonnet on Ailsa rock.<sup>50</sup>

Hearken, thou craggy ocean-pyramid &c.

We were now in Ayrshire, the country of Burns, a region of quiet beauty, with much of the character of England. We descended to the 'banks and braes of bonny Doon', examined the ruin of Kirk Alloway, indebted to the poet's imagery alone for its attraction, and saw the town of Ayr before us.<sup>51</sup>—

'Auld Ayr whom ne'er a town surpasses  
'For honest men and bonny lasses.'<sup>52</sup>

Not far from this side of the town stood the cottage

where Burns was born. Keats had predetermined to write a sonnet under its roof; but its conversion into a whiskey-shop, together with its drunken landlord, went far towards the annihilation of his poetic power.<sup>53</sup>

~~This mortal body of a thousand days &c.~~

We found our way, through Glasgow, into the highlands, where, soon quitting the carriage-roads, we explored some unfrequented districts, which, I had read, offered still grander scenery. At Oban we crossed to Mull, and, with the assistance of a guide, traversed, by no beaten track, the whole extent of that island, until we came to the celebrated island of Iona.<sup>54</sup> Thence we had a gentle sail to Staffa, where we had the good fortune to arrive, at low water, and just as the sea was becalmed, so that our boat landed us close into the mouth of Fingal's cave. Keats wrote some lines on this cave, a fragment of a poem, which I never could induce him to finish.

Not Aladdin magian &c.

Returned to Oban,<sup>55</sup> we passed by the romantic mountains of Ballahulish to Fort William, and mounted Ben Nevis. When on the summit of this mountain, we were enveloped in a cloud, and, waiting till it was slowly wafted away, he sat on the stones, a few feet away from the edge of that fearful precipice, fifteen hundred feet perpendicular from the valley below, and wrote this sonnet.<sup>56</sup>

Read me a lesson, Muse, and read it loud &c.

For some time he had been annoyed by a slight inflammation in the throat, occasioned by rainy days, fatigue, privation, and, I am afraid, in one instance, by damp sheets. It was prudently resolved, with the assistance of medical advice, that if, when we reached Inverness, he should not be much better, he should part from me, and proceed from the port of Cromarty to London by sea. He was not recovered, and we parted there.<sup>57</sup> In my solitary after-wanderings I much lamented the loss of his beloved intelligence at my side.<sup>58</sup>

Our original intention was, after visiting other parts of the highlands, to return by Edinburg. This somehow became known to M<sup>r</sup> Blackwood, who sent, through a third party, an invitation to Keats.<sup>59</sup> Nothing could exceed the impudence of such an invitation, nor the guilt of the person, through whom it was forwarded, counselling the poet to endeavour to soften the rancour of his enemies in that quarter by attention to it.

I have a poem which he composed, with more than usual care, during our walks. I introduce it here.

There is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain &c.<sup>60</sup>

It was well that he did leave me; for not only was he speedily reinstated in his usual good health, but it was necessary he should be at Hampstead, where he found his younger brother alarmingly ill.<sup>61</sup> This youth, dear to him, ~~[his brother]~~ had been, for some time, threatened by consumption; and now the disease had taken its most wasting

and rapid form. By the time I had finished my lonely tour, and returned to my home,<sup>62</sup> it was not expected he could live many days.

Early one morning<sup>63</sup> I was awakened in my bed by a pressure on my hand. It was Keats, who came to tell me his brother was no more. I said nothing, and we both remained silent for awhile, my hand fast locked in his. At length, my thoughts returning from the dead to the living, I said—‘Have ‘nothing more to do with those lodgings,<sup>64</sup>—and ‘alone too. Had you not better live with me?’ He paused, pressed my hand warmly, and replied,—‘I think it would be better.’ From that moment he was my inmate.

When his grief was alleviated, to which effect his many ~~kind~~ friends contributed their kind appliances, his hours became gradually absorbed once more in poetry. It was then he wrote *Hyperion*.<sup>65</sup> At the beginning of the year we were on a visit in Hampshire, where he began ~~the commencement of where he wrote~~ *The eve of St. Agnes*, and finished it on our return.<sup>66</sup> ~~On our return he wrote ‘Lamia’.~~ I observed that every short poem, which he was tempted to compose, was scrawled on the first piece of paper at hand, and that it was afterwards used as a mark to a book, or thrust any where aside. In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree,

where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books.<sup>67</sup> On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to a Nightingale*, a poem which has been the delight of every one. Immediately afterwards I searched for more of his (in reality) fugitive pieces, in which task, at my request, he again assisted me. Thus I rescued that *Ode* and other valuable short poems, which might otherwise have been lost. From that day he gave me permission to copy any verses he might write, and I fully availed myself of it. He cared so little for them himself, when once, as it appeared to me, his imagination was released from their influence, that it required a friend at hand to preserve them.

We passed much of this summer at Shanklin in the Isle of Wight, and at Winchester.<sup>68</sup> He was pleased with the quiet of that cathedral town, the beauty of the cathedral itself, and the elm-tree walks. We knew no one there. At Shanklin he undertook a difficult task: I engaged to furnish him with the fable, characters, and dramatic conduct of a tragedy, and he was to embody it into poetry. The progress of this work was curious; for, while I sat opposite to him, he caught my description

of each scene, entered into the characters to be brought forward, the events, and every thing connected with it. Thus he went on, scene after scene, never knowing nor inquiring into the scene which was to follow, until four acts were completed. It was then he required to know, at once, all the events which were to occupy the fifth act. I explained them to him; but, after a patient hearing, and some thought, he insisted on it that my incidents were too numerous, and, as he termed them, too melodramatic. He wrote the fifth act in accordance with his own view; and so enchanted was I with his poetry, that, at the time, and for a long time after, I thought he was in the right. This tragedy, *Otho the great*, was sent to Drury Lane Theatre,<sup>69</sup> not with his name, for (strange it now appears!) his name was not a recommendation, so utterly had it become a by-word of reproach in literature. It was, however, accepted, with a promise on the part of Elliston to bring it forward during that very season. From what I could learn, by an inadvertence of Elliston, it was Kean, to whom it was shown, who desired to play the principal character. Afterwards I was told I had mistaken the promise,—it was for the next season if possible, or for the season after the next. This delay did not suit my purpose, which was to make my friend popular in spite of his detractors.<sup>70</sup> I therefore took it from that theatre, and sent it to Covent Garden Theatre, whence it was speedily returned with a note, in a boy's hand-writing, containing a

negative. I have since had reason to believe it never was unrolled.

As soon as Keats had finished *Otho the great*, I pointed out to him a subject for an english historical tragedy in the reign of Stephen, beginning with his defeat by the Empress Maud, and ending with the death of his son Eustace, when Stephen yielded the succession to the crown to the young Henry. He was struck with the variety of events and characters which must necessarily be introduced; and I offered to give, as before, their dramatic conduct. 'The play must open', I began, 'with the field of battle, when Stephen's forces are retreating—' 'Stop!' he said, 'stop! I have been already too long in leading-strings. I will do all this myself.' He immediately set about it, and wrote two or three scenes, about 130 lines.<sup>71</sup>

This second tragedy, never to be resumed, gave place to 'Lamia', a poem which had been on hand for some months.<sup>72</sup> He wrote it with great care, after much studying of Dryden's versification.

I left him alone in Winchester for about three weeks, for he objected to accompany me.<sup>73</sup> His intention was, though he by no means expressed it, to make a trial of solitude. Just before he might have expected my return, I was surprised by a letter, dated 23 September 1819, from which the following is an extract. There was a time when I might have omitted some passages in this extract respecting myself; but I have become, year after year, more and more proud of his good opinion.

Besides, it must not be conjectured that he thought of parting from me on any other ground than is here mentioned.

‘Now I am going to enter on the subject of self. It is quite time I should set myself doing something, and live no longer upon hopes. I have never yet exerted myself. I am getting into an idle minded, vicious way of life, almost content to live upon others. In no period of my life have I acted with any self will, but in throwing up the apothecary-profession. That I do not repent of. Look at x x x x x x :<sup>74</sup> if he was not in the law he would be acquiring, by his abilities, something towards his support. My occupation is entirely literary; I will do so too. I will write, on the liberal side of the question, for whoever will pay me. I have not known yet what it is to be diligent. I propose<sup>75</sup> living in town in a cheap lodging, and endeavouring, for a beginning, to get the theatricals of soup, paper. When I can afford to compose deliberatior, poems I will. I shall be in expectation of an answer to this. Look on my side of the question. I am convinced I am right. Suppose the Tragedy<sup>76</sup> should succeed,—there will be no harm done. And here I will take an opportunity of making a remark or two on our friendship, and all your good offices to me. I have a natural timidity of mind in these matters: liking better to take the feeling for between us for granted, than to speak of it. But, good God! what a short while you have known me! I feel it a sort of duty ~~thus~~ thus to recapitulate, however unpleasant



it may be to you. You have been living for others more than any man I know. This is a vexation to me; because it has been depriving you, in the very prime of your life, of pleasures which it was your duty to procure. As I am speaking in general terms this may appear nonsense; you perhaps will not understand it: but if you can go over, day by day, any month of the last year,—you will know what I mean. On the whole, however, this is a subject that I cannot express myself upon. I speculate upon it frequently; and, believe me, the end of my speculations is always an anxiety for your happiness. This anxiety will not be one of the least incitements to the plan I purpose pursuing. I had got into a habit of mind of looking towards you as a help in all difficulties. This very habit would be the parent of idleness and difficulties. You will see it is a duty I owe myself to break the neck of it. I have nothing for my subsistence—make no exertion. for the end of another year, you shall applaud me,—not for verses, but for conduct. If you live at Hampstead next winter—I like × × × × × × × × × and I cannot help it.<sup>77</sup> On that account I had better not live there. While I have some immediate cash,<sup>78</sup> I had better settle myself quietly, and fag on as others do. I shall apply to Hazlitt,<sup>79</sup> who knows the market as well as any one, for something to bring me in a few pounds as soon as possible. I shall not suffer my pride to hinder me. The whisper may go round; I shall not hear it. If I can get an article in the “Edinburg”, I will. One must not be

delicate. Nor let this disturb you longer than a moment. I look forward, with a good hope, that we shall ~~be~~ one day be passing free, untrammelled, unanxious time together. That can never be if I continue a dead lump. × × × × × × × × × × × × × × I shall be expecting anxiously an answer from you. If it does not arrive in a few days, this will have miscarried, and I shall come straight to × × × ×<sup>80</sup> before I go to town, which you, I am sure, will agree had better be done while I still have some ready cash. By the middle of October I shall expect you in London.<sup>81</sup> We will then set at the Theatres. If you have any thing to gainsay, I shall be even as the deaf adder which stoppeth her ears.'<sup>82</sup>

On the same day he wrote another letter, having received one from me<sup>83</sup> between the writing of ~~the~~ his two. He again spoke of his purpose.

'Do not suffer me to disturb you unpleasantly: I do not mean that you should suffer me to occupy your thoughts, but to occupy them pleasantly; for, I assure you, I am as far from being unhappy as possible. Imaginary grievances have always been ~~my~~ more my torment than real ones. You know this well. Real ones will never have any other effect upon me than to stimulate me to get out of or avoid them. This is easily accounted for. Our imaginary woes are conjured up by our passions, and are fostered by passionate feeling; our real ones come of themselves, and are opposed by an abstract exertion of mind. Real grievances are displacers of passion. The imaginary nail a man down for a

sufferer, as on a cross ; the real spur him up into an agent. I wish, at one view, you could see my heart towards you. 'Tis only from a high tone of feeling that I can put that word upon paper—out of poetry. I ought to have waited for your answer to my last<sup>84</sup> before I ~~send~~ wrote this. I felt, however, compelled to make a rejoinder to your's. I had written to × × × ×<sup>85</sup> on the subject of my last.—I scarcely know whether I shall send my letter now. I think he would approve of my plan ; it is so evident. Nay, I am convinced, out and out, that by prosing for awhile in periodical works I may maintain myself decently.'

I set off immediately to him,<sup>86</sup> and we returned to town together.<sup>87</sup> Up to that period he had always expressed himself averse to writing for any periodical work. The only contribution he ever made of this kind was to the 'Champion' newspaper, in a short notice of Kean's performance of Luke in 'The city madam'.<sup>88</sup> As his poems were, to the disgrace of his contemporaries, unprofitable, in which sense alone his time had been spent idly, and as I was well acquainted with his independent feeling, there was no part of his plan, but what met with my concurrence, except the loss of his society. On this subject he heard me patiently, but concluded with insisting on the necessity of his living in a lodging in town, and by himself. He actually carried his plan into effect, not aware, as I was, of his incapability of living in solitude, and distant from the young lady in Hampstead who had won

his heart.<sup>89</sup> He remained in his new lodging two days (I think no more) and lived again with me.<sup>90</sup> He appeared to have relinquished his intention of writing in periodical works. Probably he found his aversion to such a task insuperable.

It was evident from the letters he had sent me, even in his self-deceived assurance that he was 'as far from being unhappy as possible', that he was unhappy. I quickly perceived he was more so than I had feared;<sup>91</sup> his abstraction, his occasional lassitude of mind, and, frequently, his assumed tranquillity of countenance gave me great

N° 2

## LIFE OF JOHN KEATS

by

CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN

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me great uneasiness. He was unwilling to speak on the subject; and I could do no more than attempt, indirectly, to cheer him with hope, avoiding that word however. By chance our conversation turned on the idea of a comic faery poem in the Spenser stanza, and I was glad to encourage it. He had not composed many stanzas before he proceeded in it with spirit. It was to be published under the feigned authorship of Lucy Vaughan Lloyd, and to bear the title of *The Cap and Bells*, or, which he preferred, *The Jealousies*. This occupied his mornings pleasantly. He wrote it with the greatest facility; in one instance I remember having copied (for I copied as he wrote) as many as twelve stanzas before dinner. In the evenings, at his own desire, he was alone in a separate sitting-room, deeply engaged in remodelling his poem of 'Hyperion' into a 'Vision'.<sup>92</sup> The change in the conduct of this poem has not, in the opinion of his friends, been regarded as an improvement.

This morning and evening employment was broken into by a circumstance which it is needless to mention.<sup>93</sup> He could not resume that employ-

ment, and he became dreadfully unhappy. His hopes of fame, and other more tender hopes<sup>94</sup> were blighted. His patrimony, though much consumed in a profession he was compelled to relinquish, might have upheld him through the storm, had he not imprudently lost a part of it in generous loans.<sup>95</sup> Prudence, in the vulgar acceptance of that virtue, is the ~~forbearance from~~ leaving one vice for another of economy; or it is sheer selfishness. Now he had no vice; but he was as far removed from a selfish being as can be imagined. Indeed he possessed the noble virtues of friendship and generosity to excess; and they, in this world, may chance to spoil a man of independent feeling, till he is destitute. Even the 'immediate cash', of which he spoke in the extracts I have given from his letters, was lent, with no hope of its speedy repayment, and he was left worse than pennyless. All that a friend could say, or offer, or urge was not enough to heal his many wounds. He listened, and, in kindness, or soothed by kindness, showed tranquillity, but nothing from a friend could relieve him, except on a matter of inferior trouble.

He was too thoughtful, or too unquiet; and he began to be reckless of health. Among other proofs of recklessness, he was secretly taking, at times, a few drops of laudanum to keep up his spirits. It was discovered by accident, and, without delay, revealed to me. He needed not to be warned of the danger of such a habit; but I rejoiced at his promise never to take another drop without my knowledge;

for nothing could induce him to break his word, when once given,—which was a difficulty. Still, at the very moment of my being rejoiced, this was an additional proof of his rooted misery.

Not long after this, one night—(I have no record of the date, but it was either at the end of December or the beginning of January)<sup>96</sup>,—one night, at eleven o'clock, he came into the house in a state that looked like ~~fearful~~ fierce intoxication. Such a state in him, I knew, was impossible; it therefore was the more fearful. I asked hurriedly, 'What is the matter,—you are fevered?' 'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I was on the outside of the stage this bitter day till I was severely chilled,—but now I don't feel it. Fevered!—of course, a little.' He mildly and instantly yielded, a property in his nature towards any friend, to my request that he should go to bed. I followed with the best immediate remedy in my power. I entered his chamber as he leapt into bed. On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say,—'That is blood from my mouth.' I went towards him; he was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring me the candle, Brown; and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly, he looked up in my face, with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said,—'I know the colour of that blood;—it is arterial blood;—I cannot be deceived in that colour;—that drop of blood is my death-warrant;—I must die.' I ran for a surgeon; my friend was bled; and,

at five in the morning, I left him after he had been, some time, in a quiet sleep.

His surgeon and physician both unhesitatingly declared that his lungs were uninjured.<sup>97</sup> This satisfied me, but not him: he could not reconcile the colour of that blood with their favourable opinion. He was long ill, and, at one period, unable to bear the presence of any one except his medical attendant<sup>98</sup> and myself. I am inclined to think that nobleness of mind shows more gloriously in receiving than in giving. While I waited on him, day and night, his instinctive generosity, his acceptance of my offices, by a glance of his eye, a motion of his hand, made me regard my mechanical duty as absolutely nothing compared to his silent acknowledgment. Something like this, Severn, his last nurse, observed to me; and I am convinced it was an innate virtue in him to make those who most obliged him the most obliged, without effort, without a thought, well nigh magical. I recollect his once saying,—‘If you would have me recover, flatter me with a hope of happiness when I shall be well; for I am now so weak that I can be flattered into hope.’

With the spring his strength and, apparently, his former health returned. So much so, that his physician even recommended him to join me in another walking tour to the highlands; but neither he nor I, knowing what privations and bad weather he might endure there, was of the same opinion. I went alone. It was his choice, during my absence, to lodge at Kentish Town,<sup>99</sup> that he might be near



his friend, Leigh Hunt, in whose companionship he was ever happy. He went with me in the scotch smack as far as Gravesend. This was on the 7<sup>th</sup> May. I never saw him afterwards.

As evidence of his well being I had requested him to send me some new stanzas to his comic faery poem;<sup>100</sup> for, since his illness, he had not dared the exertion of composing. At the end of eight days he wrote in good spirits, and began his letter thus :

‘My dear Brown,

You must not expect me to date my letter from such a place as this: you have heard the name; that is sufficient, except merely to tell you it is the 15<sup>th</sup> instant. You know I was very well in the smack; I have continued much the same, and am well enough to extract much more pleasure than pain out of the summer, even though I should get no better. I shall not say a word about the stanza you promised yourself through my medium, and will swear, at some future time, I promised. Let us hope I may send you more than one in my next.’ + + + + +

In June he wrote as follows; and what I heard from other quarters also tended to confirm my best hopes.

‘My dear Brown,

I have only been to + + +’s<sup>101</sup> once since you left, when × × × × could not find your letters. Now this is bad of me. I should, in this instance, conquer the great aversion to breaking up my

regular habits, which grows upon me more and more. True I have an excuse in the weather, which drives one from shelter to shelter in any little excursion. I have not heard from George.<sup>102</sup> My book\* is coming out with very low hopes, though not spirits on my part. This shall be my last trial ; not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the Apothecary line. When you hear from or see  $\times \times \times \times \times \times$ <sup>103</sup> it is probable you will hear some complaints against me, which this notice is not intended to forestall. The fact is I did behave badly;<sup>104</sup> but it is to be attributed to my health, spirits, and the disadvantageous ground I stand on in society. I would<sup>105</sup> go and accommodate matters, if I were not too weary of the world. I know that they are more happy and comfortable than I am ; therefore why should I trouble myself about it ? I foresee I shall know very few people in the course of a year or two. Men get such difficult<sup>106</sup> habits, that they become as oil and vinegar to one another. Thus far I have a consciousness of having been pretty dull and heavy, both in subject and phrase ; I might add, enigmatical. I am in the wrong, and the world is in the right, I have no doubt. Fact is, I have had so many kindnesses done me by so many people, that I am cheveux-de-frised with benefits, which I must jump over or break down. I met  $\times \times \times$ <sup>107</sup> in town a few days ago, who invited me to supper to meet Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Haydon, and some more ; I was too careful of my health

\* Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of Saint Agnes, and other poems.

to risk being out at night. Talking of that, I continue to improve slowly, but, I think, surely. All the talk at present × × × × × × × × There is a famous exhibition<sup>108</sup> in Pall Mall of the old english portraits by Vandyck and Holbein, Sir Peter Lely and the great Sir Godfrey. Pleasant countenances predominate; so I will mention two or three unpleasant ones. There is James the first,—whose appearance would disgrace a “Society for the suppression of women”; so very squalid, and subdued to nothing he looks. Then, there is old Lord Burleigh, the high priest of economy; the political save-all, who has the appearance of a Pharisee just rebuffed by a gospel bon-mot. Then, there is George the second, very like an unintellectual Voltaire, troubled with the gout and a bad temper. Then, there is young Devereux, the favourite, with every appearance of as slang a boxer as any in the court; his face is cast in the mould of blackguardism with jockey-plaster. × × × × × I shall soon begin ~~with~~ upon *Lucy Vaughan Lloyd*.<sup>109</sup> I do not begin composition yet, being willing, in case of a relapse, to have nothing to reproach myself with. I hope the weather will give you the slip; let it show itself, and steal out of your company. × × × × × When I have sent off this, I shall write another to some place about fifty miles in advance of you.

Good morning to you.

Your's ever sincerely,

JOHN KEATS.'

During a pedestrian tour, though every care is beforehand taken for the direction of letters, at particular times, and to particular places, somehow, either by inattention or error, mistakes abound. I walked on, disappointed from one post-office to another, till 9<sup>th</sup> September, when, at Dunkeld, I received letters forwarded from various parts of the Highlands, among which were two from Keats.<sup>110</sup> The first was written on 14<sup>th</sup> August,<sup>111</sup> and the second a few days after. On reading them, I turned my steps undeviatingly homewards.

‘My dear Brown,

You may not have heard from × × × × or × × × ×, or in any way, that an attack of spitting of blood, and all its weakening consequences, has prevented me from writing for so long a time. I have matter now for a very long letter, but not news; so I must cut every thing short. I shall make some confession, which you will be the only person, for many reasons, I shall trust with. A winter in England would, I have not a doubt, kill me; so I have resolved to go to Italy, either by sea or land. Not that I have any great hopes of that,—for, I think, there is a core of disease in me not easy to pull out.\* × × × × × × × × × × × × × × × × If I should die × × × × × I shall be obliged to set off in less than a month. Do not, my dear Brown, tease yourself about me. You must fill up your time as well as you can, and as happily. You must think

\* The omitted passage contained the secret.<sup>112</sup> He went to Italy in pursuance of his physician’s urgent advice.

of my faults\* as lightly as you can. When I have health I will bring up the long arrears of letters I owe you. × × × × × My book has had good success among literary people,<sup>113</sup> and, I believe, has a moderate sale. I have seen very few people we know. × × × has visited me more than any one. I would go to × × × × × and make some inquiries after you, if I could with any bearable sensation; but a person I am not quite used to causes an oppression on my chest. Last week I received a letter from Shelley, at Pisa, of a very kind nature, asking me to pass the winter with him. Hunt has behaved very kindly to me. You shall hear from me again shortly.

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.'

'My dear Brown,

† × × × × × × × I ought to be off at the end of this week, as the cold winds begin to blow towards evening;—but I will wait till I have your answer to this.<sup>114</sup> I am to be introduced, before I set out, to a Dr Clarke, a physician settled at Rome, who promises to befriend me in every way at Rome.<sup>115</sup> The sale of my book is very slow, though it has been very highly rated. One of the causes, I understand from different quarters, of the unpopularity of this new book, and the others also,

\* Sixteen years<sup>116</sup> have not changed my opinion. I thought then, and I think now, ~~that~~ he had no fault. On the faulty side he was scarcely human.

† The commencement is a continuation of the secret in his former letter, ending with a request that I would accompany him to Italy.

is the offence the ladies take at me. On thinking that matter over, I am certain that I have said nothing in a spirit to displease any woman I would care to please: but still there is a tendency to class women in my books with roses and sweetmeats,—they never see themselves dominant.\* If ever I come to publish “Lucy Vaughan Lloyd”, there will be some delicate picking for squeamish stomachs. I will say no more, but, waiting in anxiety for your answer, doff my hat, and make a purse as long as I can.

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.’

On my arrival at Dundee, a smack was ready to sail, and with a fair wind. Yet I was one day too late. Unknown to each other at the time, our vessels lay, side by side, at Gravesend;<sup>117</sup> for he had been recommended to go to Italy by sea, and was then on the first night of his voyage.

In my absence, while the autumn was too far advancing, a dear friend, Joseph Severn, almost at a day’s warning,<sup>118</sup> accompanied him. Severn had gained the gold medal at the Royal Academy for the best historical picture among the students, and therefore was entitled to his expences to and

\* On what grounds can this opinion rest? Is not ‘Isabella’ dominant to an extreme, in affection and in heroism? Are not his other poetic women mentally dominant, only in a minor degree? As for what he says respecting his poem by the supposed ‘Lucy Vaughan Lloyd’, there is nothing in the fragment he has left, nothing in the intended construction of the story, (for I knew all, and was to assist him in the machinery of one part), but to the honour of women. Lord Byron, really popular among women, reduced them, to the offence of some men, to ‘roses and sweetmeats’.

from Italy, as well as for three years of study there.<sup>119</sup> Our Keats could not be in more affectionate hands; and I contented myself with preparing to follow him very early in the spring, and not return should he prefer to live there.<sup>120</sup> I thought of nothing but his recovery;<sup>121</sup> for all the medical men who attended him were constant in their assertions that his lungs were uninjured; and his mind, I hoped, by change of scene, and renewed strength of body, would become tranquil.

Again we were within ten miles of each other, still without knowing it at the time. Contrary winds had driven him back to Portsmouth, where he landed for a day, while I chanced to be in the neighbourhood.<sup>122</sup> I received this letter from him.

‘Maria Crowther. Off Yarmouth, Isle of Wight.  
Saturday, 28 September.<sup>123</sup>

My dear Brown,

The time has not yet come for a pleasant letter from me. I have delayed writing to you from time to time, because I felt how impossible it was to enliven you with one heartening hope of my recovery. This morning in bed the matter struck me in a different manner: I thought I would write “while I was in some liking”,<sup>124</sup> or I might become too ill to write at all, and then, if the desire to have written should become strong, it would be a great affliction to me. I have many more letters to write, and I bless my stars that I have

begun, for time seems to press,—~~I may~~ this may be my last opportunity. We are in a calm, and I am easy enough this morning. If my spirits seem too low, you may, in some degree, impute it to our having been at sea a fortnight<sup>125</sup> without making any way. I was very disappointed at not meeting you at Bedhampton, and am very provoked at the thought of you being at Chichester to-day. I should have delighted in setting off for London, for the sensation merely,—for what should I do there? I could not leave my stomach, or lungs,<sup>126</sup> or other worse things behind me. I wish to write on subjects that will not agitate me much,—there is one I must mention, and have done with it. Even if my body would recover of itself, this would prevent it. The very thing<sup>127</sup> I want to live most for will be a great occasion of my death. I cannot help it. Who can help it? Were I in health it would make me ill, and how can I bear it in my state? I dare say you will be able to guess on what subject I am harping. You know what was my greatest pain during the first part of my illness at your house. I wish for death every day and night to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed. I often wish for you, that you might flatter me with the best.



I think, without my mentioning it, for my sake you would be a friend to  $\times \times \times \times$ <sup>128</sup> when I am dead. If there is any thing you can do for her by word or deed, I know you will do it. I am in a state at present in which woman, merely as woman, can have no more power over me than stocks and stones, and yet the difference of my sensations with respect to her<sup>129</sup> and my sister is amazing. The one seems to absorb the other to a degree incredible.<sup>130</sup> The thought of leaving her<sup>129</sup> is beyond every thing horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me! I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using, during my last nursing,<sup>131</sup> ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find all this a dream? There must be: we cannot be created for this sort of suffering;—the receiving this letter is to be one of your's!

I will say nothing about our friendship, or rather your's to me, more than that, as you deserve to escape, you will never be so unhappy as I am. I should think of you in my last moments. I shall endeavour to write to her,<sup>129</sup>—if possible to-day. A sudden stop to my life in the middle of one of these letters would be no bad thing, for it keeps one in a sort of fever awhile. Though fatigued with a letter longer than any I have written for a long while, it would be better to go on for ever than awake to a sense of contrary winds. We expect to put into Portland roads to-night. The captain, the crew, and the passengers are all ill tempered

and weary. I shall write to  $\times \times \times$ <sup>132</sup> I feel as if I was closing my last letter to you.

My dear Brown,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.\*

I make no comment on this, nor shall I on two more letters from him; I cannot. Besides, what have the admirers of his poems and his character ~~except~~ to do except with him alone, and to sympathise with his sufferings? ~~alone?~~ Another's would be discordant. His next was written when he had arrived at the end of his voyage.

'Naples. Wednesday first in November.'<sup>133</sup>

My dear Brown,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine, during which my health suffered more from bad air and a stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would the faintest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—\* My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I

\* He could not go on with this sentence, nor even write the word 'quit',—as I suppose. The word WRETCHEDNESS above he himself wrote in large characters.

cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God! God! God! Every thing I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her hand writing would break my heart—even to hear of her any how, to see her name written would be more than I can bear.<sup>134</sup> My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +,—if—Remember me to all. I will endeavour to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I should<sup>135</sup> urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give

me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her. I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

Thursday. I was a day too early for the courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account from × × × × × ×<sup>136</sup> I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to——<sup>137</sup>

God bless you!'

The pain of this was relieved by the account Severn sent, by the same post, of his usual tone of mind, and of the opinion of the physicians there,—all positive there was no disease of the lungs. The account, indeed, was cheering and hopeful. Then I heard from Keats himself, when he had reached Rome, in a comparatively happy mood.

'Rome. 30 November 1820.

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world ~~for~~ to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in Quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the proing and conning of any thing interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having past, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer any thing in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any hand writing of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse,—and, at my worst, even in Quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me—I have been well, healthy, alert &c., walking with her—and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture,—but you must bring your philosophy to bear—as I do

mine, really—or how should I be able to live? Dr Clarke is very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George,—for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to  $\times \times \times \times \times$ <sup>138</sup> yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. I shall write to  $\times \times \times$  to-morrow, or next day.<sup>139</sup> I will write to  $\times \times \times \times \times$  in the middle of next week. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell  $\times \times \times \times$ <sup>140</sup> I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess;—and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom. I can scarcely bid you good bye even in a letter. I always make an awkward bow.

God bless you!

JOHN KEATS.'

My hopes, strong till then, were lost on the receipt of the following letter from Severn. I perceived that his physicians had been in error, and that the words of Keats himself, spitting up that

one drop of blood,—‘That drop of blood is my death-warrant!’—were true.

‘Rome. 14 December 1820.

My dear Brown,<sup>141</sup>

I fear our<sup>142</sup> poor Keats is at his worst. A most unlooked for relapse has confined him to his bed, with every chance against him. It has been so sudden upon what I thought<sup>143</sup> convalescence, and without any seeming cause, that I cannot calculate on the next change. I dread it; for his suffering is so great, so continued, and his fortitude so completely gone, that any further change must make him delirious. This is the fifth day, and I see him get worse. But stop,—I will tell you the manner of this relapse from the first.<sup>144</sup>

17 December. 4 Morning.<sup>145</sup> Not a moment can I be from him. I sit by his bed, and read all day,—and, at night, I humour him in all his wanderings. He has just fallen asleep,—the first<sup>146</sup> for eight nights, and now from mere exhaustion. I hope he will not wake until I have written this; for I am anxious, beyond measure, to have you know this his worse and worse state,—yet I dare not let him see I think it dangerous.<sup>147</sup>

I had seen him awake on the morning of this attack, and, to all appearance, he was going on merrily, and had unusial<sup>148</sup> good spirits;—when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited nearly<sup>149</sup> two cup-fulls of blood.<sup>150</sup> In a moment I got Dr Clarke, who saw the manner of it, and immediately took away about eight ounces of blood

from the arm,—it was black and thick in the extreme.<sup>151</sup> Keats was much alarmed and dejected. Oh! what an awful day I had with him!<sup>152</sup> He rushed out of bed, and said, “This day shall be my last!”—and, but for me, most certainly it would. At the risk of losing his confidence, I took every destroying mean<sup>153</sup> from his reach, nor did I let him be free from my sight one minute. The blood broke forth<sup>154</sup> in like quantity the next morning, and the doctor thought it expedient to take away the like quantity of blood;—this was in the same dismal state, and must have been so,<sup>155</sup> from the horrible state of despair he was in. But I was so fortunate as to talk him into a little calmness, and, with some english newspapers, he became quite patient under the necessary arrangements.

This is the ninth day, and no change for the better. Five times the blood has come up in coughing, in large quantities, generally in the morning, and nearly the whole time his saliva has been mixed with it.<sup>156</sup> But this is the less<sup>157</sup> evil compared with his stomach. Not a single thing will digest. The torture he suffers all and every night, and best part of the day, is dreadful in the extreme. The distended stomach keeps him in perpetual hunger or craving; and this is augmented by the little nourishment he takes to keep down the blood. Then his mind is worse than all: despair in every shape—his imagination and memory present every thought<sup>158</sup> in horror—so strong that every<sup>159</sup> morning and night I tremble for his



intellect—the recollection of England—of his “good friend Brown”—and his “happy few weeks in x x x x x’s<sup>160</sup> care”—his sister and brother. Oh! he will mourn over every circumstance to me whilst I cool his burning forehead—until I tremble through every vein—concealing<sup>161</sup> my tears from his staring glassy eyes. How he can be Keats again from all this—I have little hope—but I may see it too gloomily,<sup>162</sup> since each coming night I sit up adds its dismal contents to my mind.

D<sup>r</sup> Clarke will not say so much. Although there are<sup>163</sup> no bounds to his attention, yet with little success can he “administer to a mind diseased”. Yet, all that can be done, most kindly he does;—whilst his lady, like himself in refined feeling, prepares and cooks all that poor Keats takes;—for in this wilderness of a place (for an invalid) there was<sup>163</sup> no alternative. Yesterday D<sup>r</sup> Clarke went all over Rome for<sup>164</sup> a certain kind of fish, and got it; but, just as I received it from M<sup>rs</sup> Clarke,<sup>165</sup> delicately prepared,—Keats was taken by the spitting of blood—and is now gone back all the eight<sup>166</sup> days. This was occasioned by disobeying the doctor’s commands. Keats is required to be kept as low as possible, to check the blood; so that he is weak and gloomy. Every day he raves<sup>167</sup> he will die from hunger, and I was obliged to give<sup>168</sup> more than allowed. You cannot think how dreadful this is for me. The doctor, on one<sup>169</sup> hand, tells me I shall kill him to give<sup>168</sup> more than he allows, and Keats raves for more till I am in a complete

tremble for him;—but I have talked him over now. We have the best opinion of Dr Clarke's<sup>170</sup> skill; he seems to understand the case, and comes over four or five times<sup>171</sup> a day. He left word at twelve this morning to call any time in case of danger.<sup>172</sup> For myself, I am keeping up beyond my most sanguine expectation.<sup>173</sup> Eight nights I have been up, and, in the days, never a moment away from my patient, unless<sup>174</sup> to run over to the doctor. But I will confess my spirits have been quite<sup>175</sup> pulled down. These wretched Romans have no idea of comfort. Here am I<sup>176</sup> obliged to wash up, cook, and read to Keats all day. Added to this, I have had no letters yet from my family.<sup>177</sup> × × × × × × × × Will you, my dear Brown, write to *me*, for a letter to Keats now would almost kill him. Give × × ×<sup>178</sup> this sad news. I am quite exhausted. Farewell. I wish you were here, my dear Brown.

Your's<sup>179</sup> sincerely,

JOSEPH SEVERN.

I have just looked at him—this will be a good night.'

The tragedy goes on to the last, still in the words of kind hearted Severn.

'Rome. 8 February 1821.<sup>180</sup>

My dear Brown,

I have just got your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> January. The contrast of your quiet friendly Hampstead with this lonely place and our poor suffering Keats

brings the tears into my eyes. I wish many, many times that he had never left you. His recovery must have been impossible whilst he was in England, and his excessive grief since has made it more so. In your care he seemed to me like an infant in its mother's arms;<sup>181</sup> you would have smoothed down his pain by varieties; his death might have been eased by the presence of his many friends. But here, with one solitary friend, in a place savage for an invalid, he has one more pang added to his many;—for I have had the hardest task in keeping from him my painful situations. I have kept him alive by these means, week after week. He had refused all food; but I tried him every way. I left him no excuse. Often I have prepared his meals six times a day, and kept from him the trouble I had in doing it. I have not been able to leave him;—that is, I have not dared to do it, but when he slept. Had he come here alone, he would have plunged into the grave in secret;—we should never have known one syllable about him. This reflection alone repays me for all I have done. It is impossible to conceive what the sufferings of this poor fellow have been. Now—he is still alive, and calm;—if I say more, I shall say too much. Yet, at times, I have hoped he would recover,—but the doctor shook his head,—and, as for Keats, he would not hear that he was better. The thought of recovery is beyond every thing dreadful to him. We now dare not perceive any improvement; for the hope of death seems his only comfort. He

talks of the quiet grave as the first rest he can ever have. I can believe and feel this most truly.

In the last week a great desire for books came across his mind. I got him all the books at hand; and, for three days, this charm lasted on him,—but now it has gone. Yet he is very calm. He is more and more reconciled to his horrible misfortunes.

14<sup>th</sup> February. Little or no change has taken place since the commencement of this,—except this beautiful one, that his mind is growing to great quietness and peace. I find this change has its rise from the increasing weakness of his body; but it seems like a delightful sleep to me,—I have been beating about in the tempest of his mind so long. To-night he has talked very much to me, but so easily, that he, at last, fell into a pleasant sleep. He seems to have comfortable dreams, without the night-mare. This will bring on some change,—it cannot be worse,—it may be better. Among the many things he has requested of me to-night, this is the principal one,—that on his grave-stone shall be this,—

HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER.

Nº. 3

## LIFE OF JOHN KEATS

by

CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN

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You will understand this so well, that I need not say a word about it. But, is it not dreadful that he should, with all his misfortunes on his mind, and perhaps wrought up to their climax, end his life without one jot of human happiness? When he first came here, he purchased a copy of Alfieri,—but put it down at the second page,—

“Misera me! sollievo a me non resta

“Altro che il pianto,—ed il pianto è delitto.”<sup>182</sup>

He was much affected at this passage; and now that I know so much more of his grief, I do not wonder at it.

Such<sup>183</sup> a letter has come! I gave it to Keats, supposing it to be one of your's,—but it proved sadly otherwise;—the glance of that letter tore him to pieces,—the effects were on him for many days!—he did not read it—he could not—but requested me to place it in his coffin, together with a purse and a letter (unopened) of his sister's—since which time he has requested me *not* to place that letter in his coffin, but only his sister's purse and letter, with some hair. Here<sup>184</sup> he found many causes of his illness in the exciting and thwarting

of his passions, but I have persuaded him to feel otherwise on this delicate point. In his most irritable state, he sees a friendless world, with every thing that his life presents, particularly the kindness of his friends, tending to his untimely death.

I have got an English nurse to come two hours every other day, so that I have quite recovered my health; but my nurse, after coming five<sup>185</sup> times, has been taken ill to-day; this is a little unfortunate as Keats seemed to like her. Another and greater misfortune is the cursed rumpus betwixt the Neapolitans and the Austrians. We are daily fearing that the thievish Neapolitans will arrive and ransack Rome. They are on their way hither; and, from the grudge betwixt them and the Romans, we have little to hope for. Rome might be taken with a straw—it is only defended by its relics. At twelve last night they rumbled all their artillery by here to the Porta Santa Giovanna. The Pope was on his legs all night, trusting any thing rather than heaven. If the Austrians do not arrive in time, our P's and Q's are likely to be altered. The English are very numerous here. Farewell.

Sincerely your's,

JOSEPH SEVERN.

In a little back-room I get chalking out a picture. This, with swallowing a little Italian every day, helps to keep me up. The Doctor was delighted with your kindness to Keats. He is a most worthy man; we must ever respect him for his unremitting kindness to Keats.

P.S. The post does not go for another two hours. To my great astonishment, I found it half past three this morning when I had done writing. You see I cannot do any thing until poor Keats is asleep. This morning he has waked very calm. I think he seems somewhat better. He has taken half a pint of fresh milk. The milk here is beautiful to all the senses—it is delicious—for three weeks he has lived on it, sometimes taking a pint and a half in a day.

You astonish me about × × × × × × ×<sup>186</sup>

The Doctor has been; he thinks Keats worse. He says the expectoration is the most dreadful he ever saw. Keats's inward grief must have been beyond limit. His lungs are in a dreadful state. His stomach has lost all its power. Keats himself says he has fretted to death—from the first little drop of blood he knew he must die—he says no common chance of living was for him.'

'Rome. 27 February 1821.<sup>187</sup>

My dear Brown,

He is gone—he died with the most perfect ease—he seemed to go to sleep. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, about 4, the approaches of death came on. "Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy—don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come!" I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until 11, when he gradually sunk into death—so quiet—that I still thought he slept. I cannot say now—I am broken down from four nights' watching, and

no sleep since, and my poor Keats gone. Three days since, the body was opened; the lungs were completely gone. The Doctors could not conceive by what means he had lived these two months. I followed his poor body to the grave on Monday, with many English. They take such care of me here—that I must, else, have gone into a fever. I am better now—but still quite disabled.

The Police have been. The furniture, the walls, the floor, every thing must be destroyed by order of the law. But this is well looked to by D<sup>r</sup> C.

The letters I put into the coffin with my own hand.

I must leave off.

J. S.

This goes by the first post. Some of my kind friends would have written else. I will try to write you every thing next post; or the Doctor will.

They had a mask—and hand and foot done—  
I cannot get on—'

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These details of suffering and death may be called by the public an infliction of unnecessary pain. Not so; the public, the countrymen of a poet, whose merit, either from ignorance or credulity, carelessness or caprice, they did not choose to acknowledge, cannot be too minutely made acquainted with the consequences of their neglect.

After twenty years,<sup>188</sup> with all the charity of which my nature is capable, my belief continues to be that he was destroyed by hirelings, under



the imposing name of Reviewers. Consumption, it may be urged, was in the family ; his father<sup>189</sup> and his younger brother had both died of it ; therefore, his fate was inevitable. Perhaps it was so ; perhaps not. The brother who died was very tall and narrow chested ; our Keats was short, with well-proportioned limbs, and with a chest remarkably well-formed for strength. At the most, it comes to this : if an hereditary predisposition existed, that predisposition might not have been called into action, except by an outrageous denial of his now acknowledged claim to be ranked as a poet of England. Month after month, an accumulation of ridicule and scoffs against his character and person, did worse than tear food from the mouth of a starving wretch, for it tore honour from the poet's brow. Could he have been less sensitive, could he have been less independent, could he have truckled to his self-constituted judges, could he have flattered the taste of the public, and pandered to their will and pleasure—in fact, could he have ceased to be John Keats, he might have existed at this moment, happy as one of the inferior animals of the creation.

As a critic on his poems, I confess myself incapable. I have purposely refrained from the task. While alive to their beauties, I am conscious of not being so to their faults. Time has not allayed my admiration. To dwell alone upon the beauties of his works is ample joy, and I seek not to have it diminished. Upon this subject I have but one observation to offer : he was, from the first day he

became a poet, in progressive improvement. To this his poems bear witness. How high, had he not been destroyed by hirelings or disease, his genius might have soared, is a thought that at once exalts and depresses me.

*Following the memoir are the following poems, copied in Brown's hand:*

Ode on a Grecian Urn, stanzas i-iv.

To John Reynolds in answer to his Robin Hood Sonnets.

Lines to the Mermaid Tavern.

Song, 1818 ('Hence Burgundy, Claret, and Port').

Song, 1818 ('O blush not so').

Ode on Melancholy.

Ode to Autumn, stanza 3.

Fragment, 1818 ('Where's the Poet? Show him! Show him!').

Ode to Psyche.

Ode to Fancy.

'Welcome Joy, and welcome Sorrow.'

Sonnet to the Nile.

King Stephen, part of Act 1, Scene 1, and Scene 2.



## NOTES

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1. Brown was inaccurate in stating that he missed seeing Shelley in Pisa by only a few days. Shelley lived in Pisa from January 1820 till April 1822, when he moved to San Terenzo, near Lerici. He was drowned on July 8, 1822, while returning from Leghorn to Lerici. His body was recovered on July 18 and cremated, after a temporary burial, on August 15. Brown reached Pisa on August 30, 1822, and wrote to Severn of these events on September 5 as if they had just occurred, saying: 'Here I am at last. I arrived here six days ago. . . . You have heard, I suppose, of Shelley being drowned near Lerici. . . . His body has been burnt, and I understand his ashes are to be deposited near his child at Rome.' (Sharp, p. 129.)
2. Brown made some revisions of his *Life of John Keats* in 1841 before sending his Keatsiana to Milnes on the eve of his emigration to New Zealand. This sentence was undoubtedly written at that time, twenty years after Keats's death. See Introduction, p. 23.
3. Elsewhere Brown referred to the writing of this memoir as a painful duty. See Introduction, p. 17.
4. This sentence must have been added in 1841, for in 1836, when Brown was writing his *Life*, he did not consider Keats's fame great enough to warrant the erection of a monument to his memory. See his letter to Severn, November 26, 1836, Sharp, p. 178. Even in 1841, Keats's reputation was not high, if we may judge from the re-publications of his poems during the twenty years since his death. Galignani issued his poetry in 1829, in Paris, with that of Shelley and Coleridge. Keats was issued separately in Buffalo, New York, in 1834. The first English reprint, taken from Galignani, was W. Smith's 'Standard Library' edition of Keats, published in 1840. Doubtless this publication caused Brown to remark, with some exaggeration, 'the best and the greater part of his literary countrymen have learnt to feel delight in his poetry'.
5. Milnes detected this error, correcting the year from 1796 to 1795. Keats's friends, strangely enough, were in ignorance

concerning his birthday and birthplace. Two years after Hunt had erroneously said that Keats was born on October 29, 1796 (*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, second edition, 1828, i. 409), Brown wrote to him on June 1, 1830, saying: 'Can Clarke tell me in what parish Keats was born? for I think you have given a wrong birth day, though you have his authority. I have written about this to London, but, for want of a clue to his parish, I am unanswered.' (Unpublished letter, in the British Museum.) Brown never received satisfactory information and repeated Hunt's error. Keats was born in Moorfields, but, to be precise, Brown should have said that he was born in his parents' quarters in the livery stable, 'at the sign of the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, facing the then open space of Lower Moorfields.' (Colvin, p. 3.)

Keats's baptismal record, in St. Botolph's Church, Bishopsgate, shows that he was born on October 31, 1795. The evidence for October 29 as his birthday, accepted definitely by Miss Amy Lowell (i. 5) and partially by Sir Sidney Colvin (who wrote that Keats was born 'on either the 29th or 31st of October, 1795') rests on the statements in Brown's memoir and Hunt's book, on an affidavit of Ann Burch, and on a remark by Keats in his journal letter to George and Georgiana Keats of October 1818. Brown's own footnote on the date of Keats's birth shows his uncertainty, and Ann Burch was far from positive on the date. According to the transcripts of the Chancery proceedings of *Rawlings v. Jennings* prepared for Sir Sidney Colvin by Ralph Thomas, solicitor (now among the Colvin papers in the Keats Museum at Hampstead), 'Ann Burch, of Upper Clapton, widow,' swore to an affidavit on June 29, 1825, that she was intimately acquainted with Thomas and Frances Keats before and after the birth of John Keats, and 'that s<sup>d</sup> J. K. was born in the year 1795, viz<sup>t</sup>, on or about the 29th Oct.' The evidence of Keats himself is even less conclusive for October 29. He interrupted his journal letter of October 1818 at many clearly indicated points, and it is utterly impossible to ascertain on what date he concluded the letter with the statement, 'This day is my Birth day.' (*Letters*, p. 243.)

The case for October 29, then, rests on most unsatisfactory evidence, which cannot discredit the grounds for assuming that Keats was born on October 31. H. Buxton Forman first discovered the entry in the baptismal records, of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, which shows that Keats was christened on Decem-

ber 18, 1795, and which states that he was born on October 31. Miss Lowell (i. 5) wrote that this birth date is recorded in 'a marginal note, said to be in the handwriting of the rector, Dr. Conybeare'. As a matter of fact, the date is not relegated to the margin, and the form of the entry is precisely that of others on the same page. It reads: 'Dec. 18, 1795. John Keats. Son of Thomas & Frances. Oct. 31.' William Conybeare, the rector of St. Botolph's from 1776 to 1815, certified the accuracy of records on this and other sheets of the register by signing his name at the foot of the page. As Miss Lowell said, 'the rector could know nothing of the matter except what he was told and may very possibly have mistaken what was said', but at least he recorded the date he believed correct some six weeks after the birth of Keats instead of almost thirty years later, as Ann Burch did, and he relied upon the parents themselves instead of upon the hearsay of a lady to whom Keats had mentioned his birthday.

6. The schoolfellow was probably Clarke, who recorded in his *Recollections of Writers* (London, 1878, p. 120) that Keats was born on October 29, 1795.
7. Fanny Brawne, of course, is the lady to whom Keats would most probably have told his birthday. Her copy of Leigh Hunt's *Literary Pocket Book*, 1819, is preserved in the Keats Museum at Hampstead; opposite the date, August 9, she wrote 'my birthday', but she made no note on October 29 or 31.

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8. Milnes corrected this statement, recording that Keats's father married the daughter of 'Mr. Jennings, the proprietor of large livery-stables on the Pavement in Moorfields, nearly opposite the entrance into Finsbury Circus'. (Milnes, p. 10.)
9. Keats was eight when his father died, in April 1804, and fourteen at his mother's death, in March 1810. The date seems to have been reported wrongly in the Chancery proceedings of *Rawlings v. Jennings* as February 1810, for the records of St. Stephen's, Coleman Street, show that she was buried in that church on March 20, 1810.
10. Brown's statement on the Keats children is correct, but Milnes disregarded it, writing 'he [John] had two brothers, George, older than himself, Thomas, younger, and a sister much

younger'. (Everyman edition [a reprint of the first edition, of 1848], p. 11.) Milnes corrected his error in his revised edition of 1867, with the statement, 'he had two younger brothers, George and Thomas, and a sister much younger'. (1867 edition, p. 4.) As a matter of fact, there were five Keats children, including Edward, who died in infancy.

11. Brown wrote to Dilke asking him to confirm this statement concerning the Keats children's inheritance. His letter, post-marked February 9, 1830, says: 'In writing Keats's life, in order to salve over his "low origin" as Hunt calls it, as a good patrimony is the next best thing (even in the eyes of aristocrats,) to a good parentage, I wish to know if I am correct in saying this.' He then quoted the sentence from the memoir. (Unpublished letter, in the Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.) Apparently Dilke did not reply. In the notes which he made in his copy of Milnes's *Keats*, now in the J. P. Morgan Library, New York (ii. 40), is found Dilke's statement: 'Milnes says they [the four Keats children] had about £8000 & would perhaps quote me as authority—But my impression [is] that I said Mrs. Llanos [*née* Fanny Keats] had about or above £2200—She had I think a *special* legacy, & this £2200 included her share of Tom's property. Take John's property at £1500.' Dilke, therefore, believed that Brown over-estimated Keats's inheritance by £500 and Fanny Keats's by some £1,800.

Milnes stated (p. 13): 'About eight thousand pounds were left to be equally divided among the four children.'

12. John Clarke, headmaster of the Enfield school and father of Keats's friend Charles Cowden Clarke, was never a clergyman. He was a lawyer before becoming a schoolmaster.
13. Church Street, Edmonton, was the address of Thomas Hammond, the surgeon, and of Mrs. Jennings, Keats's grandmother. (Lowell, i. 47.)
14. Brown probably derived this opinion from both John Keats and his brother Tom. On June 1, 1830, he wrote to Leigh Hunt: 'I want to make out as far as I can, the development of his [Keats's] mind. Both he and Tom have talked to me a little on this subject.' (Unpublished letter, in the British Museum.) Clarke, on the other hand, believed that Keats wrote his first poem, the 'Imitation of Spenser', at the age of sixteen, not eighteen. (*Recollections of Writers*, p. 125.)

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15. Milnes quotes Clarke as his authority for the early influence of Spenser's *Faery Queen* on Keats (p. 14).
16. Omitting four sentences and with minor variants, Colvin quoted this paragraph from Brown. Concerning the date of this first poem, he wrote: 'Clarke places the attempt two years earlier, but his memory for dates was, as he owns, the vaguest. We may fairly take Brown to be on this point the better informed of the two, and may assume that it was some time in the second year after he left school [i.e. 1813] that the Spenser fever took hold on Keats, and with it the longing to be himself a poet.' (Colvin, pp. 20-1.)

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17. This letter is lost. It must have been written to George, since Tom accompanied Keats to Canterbury, shortly after May 16, 1817. In writing to Bailey on October 8, 1817, Keats referred to 'a Letter I wrote to George in the Spring', from which he copied a long passage (*Letters*, pp. 52-3). It is possible that the phrase Brown quotes was in this letter, which seems to have come into Brown's hands because it was among the papers of John instead of George Keats.
18. Milnes (p. 26) and Lowell (i. 186) give slightly different versions of this quotation. Colvin (p. 29) quotes it verbatim from Brown, but without naming him.
19. Clarke showed Hunt some of Keats's poems, probably in 1816. (Lowell, i. 133.)
20. Hunt wrote: 'I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer.' (*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, second edition, i. 409-10.)
21. *Poems*, by John Keats. London: Printed for C. & J. Ollier, 3, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square. 1817.

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22. Brown refers to Hunt's description of Keats: 'If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity.' (Op. cit. i. 407.) Milnes followed Hunt's description of Keats instead of Brown's (p. 12).



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23. Brown made no attempt to summarize in chronological order Keats's travelling during the writing of *Endymion*. Miss Lowell listed his excursions of 1817 as follows: on April 14 he left London for Southampton (i. 295); on the 15th he went to Newport, Isle of Wight, and took lodgings at near-by Carisbrooke (i. 301). Here he probably began *Endymion*. After about a week, he went to Margate, where Tom joined him (i. 306), to stay until May 16, when the brothers left for Canterbury (i. 316). Keats seems to have gone alone to Bo Peep, near Hastings, before he returned to Hampstead early in June (i. 462-4). Probably on September 2 or 3, he and Bailey went to Oxford (i. 485), and on October 2, according to evidence which no longer exists, they visited Stratford-on-Avon (i. 510; see also *Letters*, pp. 175-6 n.). Keats returned to Hampstead from Oxford on October 5 (i. 511). He remained until November 20, when he went to Burford Bridge, at the foot of Box Hill (i. 522), finishing *Endymion* there on November 28 (i. 530). We do not know the date of his return to Hampstead, but it was no later than December 15 (i. 537). Probably on or about March 1, 1818, he left to join Tom in Teignmouth (i. 597), where he finished his work on *Endymion* and saw it through the press. By the middle of May, John and Tom returned to Hampstead (i. 631).
24. Milnes (p. 53) published this poem, with Keats's letter to Bailey of January 23, 1818, in which it was included. The poem is not among the twelve which Brown copied at the end of his memoir.
25. Brown's statement is incorrect. As Miss Lowell wrote of *Blackwood's* at this time, it 'was in its pre-Lockhart, pre-Wilson, stage, being merely, at the moment, an unsuccessful bantling struggling for existence. Its days of influence were a half a year away'. (i. 273.) Of the six contemporary reviews of *Poems* (1817), four were distinctly favourable and two were not unfriendly. (G. L. Marsh and N. I. White, 'Keats and the Periodicals of His Time', *Modern Philology*, xxxii, August 1934, 38-9.)
- Brown also exaggerated the extent of *Blackwood's* attacks on Keats. Hunt was the chief victim of the amazingly violent attacks, signed 'Z', on 'The Cockney School of Poetry'. The fourth of this series of essays (*Blackwood's Magazine*, iii, August 1818, 519-24) flays *Endymion*, with subordinate detraction of

Keats's first volume, but in the other five essays of the series the contemptuous allusions to Keats were only incidental.

26. The leading reviews of the period were strongly political organs. *The Edinburgh Review* was Whig, *The Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* were Tory.
27. Hunt said that the libel for which he was imprisoned 'originated in my sympathy with the sufferings of the people of Ireland', and was precipitated 'by my indignation at the Regent's breaking his promises to the Irish'. (E. Blunden, *Leigh Hunt*, 1930, p. 69 n.) The libellous article, 'Princely Qualities', was published in *The Examiner*, March 22, 1812, but numerous delays postponed the imprisonment of Leigh and John Hunt until February 3, 1813. They were released on February 2, 1815.

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28. *Blackwood's Magazine* did not thus describe Keats in the essays 'On the Cockney School of Poetry'. The reviewer (probably John Wilson) of Hunt's *Literary Pocket-Book* wrote of Keats in the manner to which Brown so justly objected; after quoting Keats's sonnets, 'The Human Seasons' and 'To Ailsa Rock', the reviewer wrote: 'But who but himself could form such portentous folly as in the second? Mister John Keates standing on the sea-shore at Dunbar, without a neckcloth, according to custom of Cockaigne, and cross-questioning the Craig of Ailsa! . . . He is at present a very amiable, silly, lispng, and pragmatistical young gentleman—but we hope to cure him of all that—and should have much pleasure in introducing him to our readers in a year or two speaking the language of this country, counting his fingers correctly, and condescending to a neckcloth.' (*Blackwood's Magazine*, vi, December 1819, 239–40.)
29. The 'Notices' of *Blackwood's Magazine* for March 1818 commenting on articles sent to the editor. Brown recalled the following reference from these 'Notices' to Hazlitt:
- 'Of pimpled Hazlitt's coxcomb lectures writing,  
Our friend with moderate pleasure we peruse.'
- Although the editors of *Blackwood* wished to insult Hazlitt, the author of the reviews on his 'Lectures on English Poetry', Peter George Patmore, gave Hazlitt serious and favourable criticism. In his concluding review, he wrote: 'By the bye, what can our Editor's facetious friend mean by "pimpled Hazlitt"? If he

knows that gentleman's person, he cannot intend the epithet to apply to *that*; and how "pimpled" may be interpreted with reference to *mind*, we are not able to divine.' (*Blackwood's Magazine*, iii, April 1818, 75.) The epithet was applied to Hazlitt in *Blackwood's* for August 1818 (iii. 599), in a review of *The Works of Charles Lamb*, and in September 1820 (vii. 675), in William Maginn's 'The Building of the Palace of the Lamp, from the Danish of Oehlenschlaeger'.

30. Hazlitt, however, wrote a vigorous 'Reply to Z', answering all the impudent charges of 'Hazlitt Cross-Questioned' in *Blackwood's* for August 1818 (iii. 550-2), and including the following remark on his complexion: 'Finally, Sir, you call me as a nickname "pimpled Hazlitt". And I am *not* pimpled, but remarkably pale and sallow.' (*A Reply to Z*, 1923, p. 38.) Hazlitt planned to publish his 'Reply to Z' in *Constable's Edinburgh Magazine*, the rival of *Blackwood's*, but instead he instituted successful proceedings against the libellous magazine. (*The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 1932, ix. 249.) Part of Hazlitt's reply was published in 'Hazlitt v. Blackwood's Magazine', by Charles Whibley, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, cciv (September, 1918), 388-98, and it was first published completely by The First Edition Club of London in 1923, with an introduction by Mr. Whibley.

31. John Gibson Lockhart, only twenty-three at the time of Z's essays, in 1818, married Sir Walter Scott's daughter in 1820.

32. Brown accurately described the completely uncritical spitefulness of *The Quarterly's* review of *Endymion*, which used the following method of attack:

'It is not that Mr. Keats, (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody,) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius—he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry; which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language. . . .

'This author [Keats] is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype. . . .

'But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte.—

If any one should be bold enough to purchase this "Poetic Romance", and so much more patient, than ourselves, as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers.' (*The Quarterly Review*, xix, April 1818, 204-8.)

33. William Gifford was the editor of *The Quarterly*. John Wilson Croker wrote the review of *Endymion*.

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34. 'In order to understand Shelley's allusion, I looked up the *Quarterly Review* from April 1817 to April 1828, and have ascertained as follows. (1) The *Quarterly* of April 1817 contains a notice of *Paris in 1815, a Poem*. The author was the Rev. George Croly, but the title page does not give his name. . . . (2) *Woman* is a poem by the Mr. Barrett whom Shelley names, termed on the title-page "the Author of *The Heroine*". It was noticed in the *Quarterly* for April 1818, the very same number which contained the sneering critique of *Endymion*. . . . (3) *A Syrian Tale*. Of this book I have failed to find any trace in the *Quarterly Review*, or in the Catalogue of the British Museum. (4) Mrs. Lefanu. Neither can I trace this lady in the *Quarterly*. Mrs. Alicia Lefanu, who is stated to have been a sister of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and also her daughter, Miss Alicia Lefanu, published books during the lifetime of Shelley. . . . (5) Mr. John Howard Payne was author of *Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin, an Historical Tragedy*, criticized in the *Quarterly* for April 1820. I cannot understand why Shelley should have supposed this criticism to be laudatory: it is in fact unmixed censure.' (P. B. Shelley, *Adonais*, ed. W. M. Rossetti and A. O. Prickard, Oxford, 1903, pp. 98-100.)

35. Francis Jeffrey, the editor of *The Edinburgh Review*.

36. *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, by John Keats, author of *Endymion*. London: Printed for Taylor and Hessey, Fleet-Street. 1820.

37. By this time Keats was fatally ill with tuberculosis.

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38. *The Edinburgh Review*, xxxiv (August 1820), 205.

39. *The Edinburgh Review*, xxxiv. 203.
40. 'Severn was asked to join the party, and Haslam also; but neither was able to go.' (Sharp, pp. 35-6.)
41. Keats, his brother George and his bride, Georgiana Wylie, and Brown arrived in Liverpool June 23, 1818.
42. Keats and Brown reached Lancaster the following day, June 24. On June 25 they began their walk.

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43. Keats described the view thus to his brother George, in his letter of June 26, 1818: 'We have passed . . . from Kendal to Bownes[s] on turning down to which place there burst upon us the most beautiful and rich view of Winander mere and the surrounding Mountains.' (*Letters*, p. 157.)
44. June 27.
45. Lord Brougham was the Whig candidate running against the Tory Lord Lowther, for whom Wordsworth was electioneering, to represent Westmorland in Parliament.
46. The manuscript is slightly torn at this point.
47. July 1.

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48. Keats sent the poem on Meg Merrilies to his sister, Fanny, in his letter of July 2-4, 1818. (*Letters*, pp. 165-6.)
49. July 7 and 8. Of their brief excursion in Ireland, Brown wrote thus to Henry Snook on August 7, 1818: 'It was our intention to see the Giant's Causeway in Ireland and we took the packet from Port Patrick to Donaghadee, but did not proceed further than Belfast and returned back again, for the Irish people did not please us, and the expense was enormous.' (Keats, *The Poetical Works and Other Writings*, ed. Harry Buxton Forman, 1883, iii. 356.)
50. Keats and Brown saw Ailsa Craig, which is approximately eleven hundred feet high, on July 9. Keats described it thus to his brother Tom on July 10, and copied his sonnet 'To Ailsa Rock' into the letter: 'In a little time I descried in the Sea Ailsa Rock 940 feet high—it was 15 Miles distant and seemed close upon us—The effect of ailsa with the peculiar perspective of the Sea in connection with the ground we stood on, and the

misty rain then falling gave me a complete Idea of a deluge. Ailsa struck me very suddenly—really I was a little alarmed.’ (*Letters*, p. 181.)

Mr. Nelson S. Bushnell has carefully retraced the walking tour of Keats and Brown, checking each place mentioned by the walkers in their letters and in Brown’s account of part of this tour, published as ‘Walks in the North’ in the *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal* of October 22, 1840. In commenting on the specific details concerning Ailsa Craig given by both Keats and Brown, Mr. Bushnell suggests that the walkers probably consulted *Traveller’s Guide through Scotland*, sixth edition, Edinburgh and London, 1814, which describes Ailsa as follows: ‘No object of the scenery of this coast is more striking than the stupendous rock of Ailsa, . . . which rises almost perpendicular to the height of 940 feet. . . . Its shape is somewhat conical, and it is on all sides extremely precipitous. . . . This rock is inhabited by immense flocks of birds.’ (N. S. Bushnell, *A Walk after John Keats*, New York, 1936, p. 285.)

Mr. Bushnell (p. 183) comments on the phonetic spelling used by Keats and Brown for Scottish place names, such as ‘Cantire’ for ‘Kintyre’.

51. July 11.

52. Burns, ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, lines 15–16.

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53. Keats wrote to Bailey, July 18–22, 1818: ‘I had determined to write a Sonnet in the Cottage [of Burns]. I did but lauk it was so wretched I destroyed it.’ (*Letters*, p. 194.) Brown, however, had copied the poem before Keats destroyed it. On July 18, in writing to Reynolds and to Tom, Keats had mentioned the sonnet but had refused to transcribe it. (*Letters*, pp. 177 and 183.)

54. July 24.

55. July 26.

56. August 2.

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57. It has been argued that Keats embarked for London at Inverness on a ship calling there after sailing from Cromarty, some twenty miles to the north-east, for he wrote to George and Georgiana Keats, ‘I came by ship from Inverness and was nine

days at Sea' (*Letters*, p. 231), and to his sister Fanny, on August 18, 1818, 'I did not intend to have returned to London so soon but have a bad sore throat from a cold I caught in the island of Mull: therefore I thought it best to get home as soon as possible and went on board the Smack from Cromarty. We had a nine days passage and were landed at London Bridge yesterday' (*Letters*, pp. 212-13). The date of Keats's departure from Scotland, therefore, was August 8.

Brown's letters also pointed to Inverness instead of Cromarty as the port of departure. Writing to Charles Wentworth Dilke, senior, of Chichester, from Inverness on August 7, 1818, he said, 'I am waiting here to see him [Keats] off in the Smack for London' (*Letters*, p. 211). At the same time, he also wrote to Henry Snook, 'Mr. Keats will leave me here' (Keats, *The Poetical Works and Other Writings*, ed. Harry Buxton Forman, 1883, iii. 359).

Mr. Nelson S. Bushnell, however, shows that the only ship for London from the general port district of Inverness (which included Cromarty) during the week in question was the smack *George*, sailing from Cromarty on August 8 and not calling at Inverness. Keats obviously was on board. (*A Walk after John Keats*, pp. 297-9.)

58. We cannot determine Brown's route after Keats departed. To Mr. Dilke, senior, he wrote, 'I shall have to travel thro' Perthshire and all the Counties round in soltude', and to Henry Snook he stated his plans in terms of distance: 'I have gone 642 miles, and shall have twice as much more to accomplish if I can.' (See note 57.) He concluded this letter by giving an Edinburgh address, which, we may infer from the time allowed for letters to reach their destinations, he planned to reach about September 1. From the time of Keats's departure to this date, Brown could scarcely have walked more than five hundred miles.

At some time during his walking trips, Brown visited Loch Carron and Loch Tay, both of which lay within the range of this distance, but there is no evidence that he went there in 1818, for he spent the 'best months in three summers' in what he termed the British mountains and walked 'as many thousand miles', describing his tours in the *New Monthly Magazine* ('On the Superstitions of Highlanders and Londoners', 1821, iii. 566, and 'Mountain Scenery', 1822, iv. 247). We may safely assume that by the time he reached Edinburgh he was returning to

London, and that his southern route took him through Carlisle. (See note 108.)

59. To his paraphrase of Brown's statement, Milnes added this footnote: 'I have stated this on the authority of Mr. Brown. Mr. Robert Blackwood, son of the Mr. Blackwood of that time, thinks the circumstance very improbable, and that Mr. Brown must have been mistaken or misinformed. It does, however, appear that in the July of 1818 Mr. Bailey met, at Bishop Gleig's in Scotland, a leading contributor to "Blackwood's Magazine", with whom he had much conversation respecting Keats, especially about his relations with Leigh Hunt, and Mr. Bailey thought his confidence had been abused.' (*The Life and Letters of John Keats*, revised edition, 1867, p. 164.)

Milnes derived his information concerning Bailey from a long letter, really a memoir of Keats, which Bailey sent him after receiving a copy of Milnes's book. This unpublished letter (collection of Lord Crewe) is dated Rutnapoora, Ceylon, May 7, 1849. In a short supplementary letter, dated Colombo, May 11, 1849, Bailey stated that the 'leading contributor to "Blackwood's Magazine"' who had abused his confidence was Lockhart.

Bailey may have been the 'third party' whom Brown mentioned, as he had been introduced to Blackwood. He referred to this meeting in a letter to John Taylor from Carlisle of October 5, 1818, now among the Woodhouse papers at the Morgan Library. It is also possible that Ollier, Keats's first publisher, was the 'third party'. In commenting on Milnes's account of *Blackwood's* attack on Keats, Dilke wrote: 'At the time Keats & others believed thus that such particulars had been furnished by "the enlightened publisher" Pref XI who "out of sheer admiration" published Keats' first volume—P 21—with whom Keats quarreled P 25—with whom he would not be reconciled P 99—Mr. Ollier!' (Dilke's copy of Milnes's *Keats*, i. 198. Morgan Library.)

60. This is the poem, entitled 'Lines Written in the Highlands after a Visit to Burns's Country', which Keats sent, in place of the 'Sonnet Written in the Cottage where Burns was Born', in his letter to Bailey begun at Inverary, July 18, 1818. (*Letters*, pp. 195-7.)
61. Mrs. Dilke, writing to her father-in-law, on August 16, 1818, tells the story: 'John Keats' brother is extremely ill, and the doctor begged that his brother might be sent for. Dilke accordingly wrote off to him, which was a very unpleasant task.



However, from the journal received from Brown last Friday, he says Keats has been so long ill with his sore throat, that he is obliged to give up. I am rather glad of it, as he will not receive the letter, which might have frightened him very much, as he is extremely fond of his brother. How poor Brown will get on alone I know not, as he loses a cheerful, good-tempered, clever companion.' (C. W. Dilke, *The Papers of a Critic*, London, 1875, i. 5.)

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62. The only definite clue to the date of Brown's return from Scotland in 1818 is contained in the records of the tenants of Wentworth Place, now in the Keats Museum. They list Mrs. Brawne's tenancy as June–September, 1818, and Brown's return to his side of the house in September. However, if Brown carried out his intention of walking twice 642 miles after Keats's departure (see note 58), he must have spent most of September completing this trip. The following year he did not return to Hampstead until the middle of October (*Letters*, p. 396), which seems to be a more consistent date with the mileage he had planned for the 1818 trip. That this trip had been planned to last two months longer than Keats had been able to endure it is confirmed by his letter to George and Georgiana Keats of October 1818. (*Letters*, p. 229.) Keats's first mention of Brown in Hampstead is in the portion of this letter written between October 16 and October 21. (*Letters*, p. 238.)
63. December 1, 1818.
64. Keats and Tom had lodgings at the house of Bentley, the Hampstead postman, in Well Walk.
65. Apparently Keats began 'Hyperion' in the autumn of 1818, but he had difficulty in making progress with it. In a letter to his brother George, he wrote on December 18, 1818: 'I think you knew before you left England that my next subject would be "the fall of Hyperion". I went on a little with it last night—but it will take some time to get into the vein again.' (*Letters*, p. 253.)
66. Brown had gone to Chichester to spend a few days with Dilke's father. Keats joined him there about the middle of January 1819. (Lowell, ii. 151.) From Chichester they went to Bedhampton to visit Mrs. Snook, Dilke's sister. They probably returned to Hampstead about February 6. (Ibid. ii. 179.)

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67. Concerning this information Dilke wrote in his copy of Milnes's *Keats* (i. 245): 'We do not usually thrust waste paper behind books—But this is the tone in which the work was written. Brown had slowly and doubtingly grown into a high admiration of Keats, and began therefore to collect every scrap of his writings.'
68. Keats and his friend James Rice left London for the Isle of Wight on June 27, 1819. (Lowell, ii. 268.) Brown arrived in Shanklin some time during the week of July 19, and Rice left before July 25. (Ibid. ii. 278.) On August 12 Brown and Keats went to Winchester. (Ibid. ii. 287.)

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69. Brown had an entrée to Drury Lane. It was here that his comic opera, *Narensky, or The Road to Yaroslaf*, had been performed in 1814. The production had been a financial success, gaining Brown £300 and free admission to the theatre for life. (*Letters*, p. xlix.)
70. Apparently always anxious to detract from Brown's kindnesses to Keats, Dilke wrote the following note on 'Otho the Great' in his copy of Milnes's *Keats* (i, p. x): 'He [Brown] furnished the plots of the tragedy, Otho, on condition that he should have half profits. There was no irony in this—but why trick him out in masquerade costume as a generous protector of the man or talk of his affectionate care of the MSS.'
- The profit-sharing agreement of the enterprise, however, seems to be an example of Keats's high integrity rather than Brown's pettiness. Brown probably found it difficult to persuade Keats to work with him, even on this basis, as is shown in the passage from a letter he wrote to Milnes on March 29, 1841, quoted on p. 35.

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71. The fragment of 'King Stephen' consists of four scenes and 198 lines.
72. Miss Lowell dates 'Lamia' July–August 1819 (ii. 534). Colvin, however, states that Keats began it in June 1819 (p. 358). Brown, whose information concerning Keats during the period

they lived together is remarkably accurate, proves that Colvin is correct, for 'Lamia' must have been begun before the Isle of Wight sojourn (that is, before the middle of June) when Keats and Brown separated, or Brown would have had no knowledge, in August, that it 'had been on hand for some months'.

73. Major Charles Brown (frequently called 'Carlino'), Brown's son, states that when Brown left Keats alone in Winchester at this time he went to Ireland, where he married a peasant, who is supposed to have been the servant at Wentworth Place. Major Brown, in an unpublished memoir of his father, now in the Keats Museum, wrote: 'In August [September] 1819, when Brown left Keats at Winchester, he went over to Ireland, and married Abigail Donohoo, a handsome woman of the peasant class; the marriage was performed by a Catholic priest, and was therefore illegal, but as she was a bigoted Catholic, and Irish, she was satisfied with the blessing of the priest, and cared not for its legality.'

This explanation, undoubtedly the one Brown made to his son, coupled with the fact that during the next weeks two letters from Keats to Brown miscarried, has been the basis for accusing Brown of deceiving Keats as to his whereabouts during this time. But the following extract from Brown's letter to Keats of December 21, 1820, proves that Keats was in no ignorance of Brown's relationship with 'Abby' and that no deception was at any time necessary: 'I must tell you Abby is living with me again, but not in the same capacity,—she keeps to her own bed, & I keep myself continent. Any more nonsense of the former kind would put me in an awkward predicament with her. One child is very well.' (*Letters*, p. 529.)

The trip to Ireland, therefore, was an invention which Brown made for 'Carlino'. Keats's statement in a letter written September 5, 1819, presents the facts: 'Brown is going to Chi[che]ster and Bedhampton avising—I shall be alone here for three weeks.' (*Letters*, p. 382.) Keats's explanation of the miscarriage of the letters is thus equally correct: 'Brown who was at Bedhampton, went thence to Chichester, and I still directing my letters Bedhampton—there arose a misunderstand[ing]. . . . However yesterday [September 23] Brown had four letters from me all in a Lump.' (*Letters*, p. 425.) The practical joke, which Keats described in his letter to George of September 25, shows that Brown was in Chichester and Bedhampton during these three weeks. (*Letters*, p. 428.)

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74. As Mr. M. B. Forman notes (*Letters*, p. 395), the deleted name is obviously Reynolds. On September 22, 1819, Keats wrote to Dilke: 'If Reynolds had not taken to the law, would he not be earning something?' (*Letters*, p. 393.) Only one holograph letter from Keats to Brown is extant, that of September 28, 1820, in the Harvard College Library. All other letters from Keats to Brown are derived from Milnes or from Brown's memoir. Inconsequential variants are not noted.
75. Milnes reads 'purpose' for 'propose' (p. 186).
76. 'Otho the Great'.

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77. Milnes omits this sentence and the following one. They are present, however, in the editions of Keats's letters edited by H. Buxton Forman (1901 edition, v. 98) and by M. B. Forman (p. 396). Mr. H. Buxton Forman evidently supplied these sentences from the memoir. Neither editor suggests whose name Brown deleted; it was probably Fanny Brawne's. Although Keats was engaged to her at this time, he had written her only once since August 16, when, during a short visit from Winchester to London, he refused to go to Hampstead to see her, writing: 'I love you too much to venture to Hampstead, I feel it is not paying a visit, but venturing into a fire.' (*Letters*, p. 383.) When he wrote to Brown, Keats anticipated a Spartan existence devoted almost solely to earning, and he felt that he could not carry out this determination if he lived with Brown, next door to his fiancée.
78. "'The cash,'" observes Dilke, "borrowed from Taylor—£30 a fortnight before—on the 5th.'" (*Letters*, p. 396, n.) Dilke's note is found in his annotated copy of Milnes's *Keats*, ii. 29.
79. It was through Hazlitt that Reynolds became a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*. (W. C. Hazlitt, *Four Generations of a Literary Family*, 1897, i. 133.) According to Keats, Constable, the publisher of the *Edinburgh Review*, 'offered Reynolds ten guineas a sheet to write for his Magazine'. (*Letters*, p. 90.)

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80. Mr. M. B. Forman suggests Bedhampton, with a query. (*Letters*, p. 396.) The suggestion is probably correct, for Keats

was addressing Brown at Bedhampton (see note 73), although Keats may have written Chichester.

81. The date of Brown's return to Hampstead in the autumn depended upon the terms of his summer tenant's lease. Nathan Benjamin had rented Brown's side of Wentworth Place until the middle of October 1819. (*Letters*, p. 400.)
82. Psalm lviii. 4.

83. Keats referred to this letter when he wrote to George on September 24, 1819, saying: 'Brown complained very much in his Letter to me of yesterday of the great alteration the Disposition of Dilke has undergone. He thinks of nothing but [Godwin's] "Political Justice" and his Boy.' (*Letters*, pp. 425-6.)

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84. i.e. the letter which Brown quoted immediately before this one.
85. The name is obviously Dilke, to whom Keats wrote on September 22. Milnes left the name blank (p. 187), but H. Buxton Forman (v. 99) and M. B. Forman (p. 397) printed Dilke without indication of Brown's deletion.
86. Brown's return to Winchester is not definitely indicated, but Keats's remark to Dilke in his letter of October 1, 'Brown bids me remind you not to send the Examiners after the third' (*Letters*, p. 431), sounds more like a spoken than a written message. However it may be interpreted, Brown had returned by October 8, for on that date he added a note to Keats's letter to Haydon. (*Letters*, p. 434.)
87. Note 86 clearly indicates that Keats and Brown expected to be in Hampstead in time to receive their Sunday *Examiner* of October 10. Keats's request to Dilke to find him a room by 'next Friday', i.e. October 8 (*Letters*, p. 431), probably shows that October 8 was the date of their return.
88. Brown is in error here. Keats wrote four dramatic criticisms for *The Champion*. The first, entitled 'On Edmund Kean as a Shakespearian Actor', appeared on December 21, 1817, and criticized Kean's performance as Richard III and as Luke in a play called *Riches*, adapted from Massinger's *The City Madam*. The second, a criticism of Kean in *Richard Duke of York*, compiled from the three parts of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, was published December 28, 1817. The last two both appeared in *The Champion* for January 4, 1818: 'On "Retribution, or The

Chieftain's Daughter,"' with Macready, and 'On "Don Giovanni", a Pantomime,' the Christmas pantomime at Drury Lane Theatre.

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89. Fanny Brawne was living at this time with her mother, her sister Margaret, and her brother Sam in Dilke's half of Wentworth Place, Hampstead.
90. 'It would seem to have been at No. 25 College Street that Dilke obtained for Keats the rooms which the poet asked him to find. . . . How long Keats remained in those rooms I have been unable to determine, to a day; but in [the] letter . . . headed "Wentworth Place", and postmarked the 16th of October 1819 . . . , he speaks of having "returned to Hampstead", after lodging "two or three days . . . in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Dilke". In [his letter to Fanny Brawne of October 19, 1819] he writes from Great Smith Street (the address of the Dilkes) of his *purpose* to live at Hampstead. I suppose the "three days dream" there referred to was a visit to Mrs. Brawne's house, from which he proceeded to Mrs. Dilke's—there to come to a final resolution of living at Hampstead.' (*Letters*, pp. 434–5, n.)
91. Dilke was also aware of Keats's state of mind at this time, for which he blamed Fanny Brawne. The unpublished draft of a letter from Dilke to Milnes, headed 'Milnes M. P. Bedhampton. June 2', contains this sentence: 'His [Keats's] mind was then all in a ferment—he was in love & saw the impossibility of maintaining a wife, and as I suspect, for the first time the *consequent* impossibility of maintaining himself.' (Keats Museum.)

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92. Brown's definite statement that 'The Fall of Hyperion, a Vision' was remodelled from 'Hyperion', and the internal evidence noted by Sir Sidney Colvin (in the *London Times Literary Supplement*, March 3, 1921, p. 143) led to the abandonment of Milnes's theory, expressed in his 1867 edition, that 'The Fall of Hyperion' was the first draft. Professor de Sélincourt accepts Brown's evidence (*The Poems of John Keats*, ed. E. de Sélincourt, London, 1926, fifth edition, pp. 515–19). Miss Lowell (ii. 339–46) was unwilling to accept the evidence that 'The Fall of Hyperion' was revised from 'Hyperion'. She argued that Keats worked first

on 'The Fall', then on 'Hyperion', and, after abandoning it and under the influence of Dante, once more on 'The Fall'. Miss Lowell's theory, however, has not been widely adopted, and most scholars accept Brown's statement as correct.

93. Brown probably refers here to the financial difficulties of George Keats, whom he distrusted. George needed further capital to establish himself in Kentucky, but the proceedings in Chancery made it very difficult for him to obtain full settlement of his inherited property. Keats undertook the troublesome negotiations for him, and, as Brown says, wrote with little success or pleasure during the depression of his financial labours. (See his letter to George of November 19, 1819, *Letters*, p. 442.) During November he went frequently to town on George's business (*Letters*, p. 439), but his letter to Taylor of November 17 (*Letters*, pp. 439-40) shows that Brown exaggerated his unhappy inertia of this period.

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94. This, of course, is a veiled reference to Fanny Brawne. Brown makes no mention whatsoever of Keats's engagement to her nor to the Brawne family.
95. Brown believed that George Keats borrowed from his brother £700 in stock, £425 in cash, and about £175 to which John was entitled from the estate of Tom Keats. (Unpublished letter from Brown to Dilke, January 20, 1830, in the Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.) These loans, according to Brown, exhausted most of Keats's capital.

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96. Miss Lowell (ii. 389) dates the event on February 3, 1820. Her evidence is the letter from Keats to Fanny Brawne of February 4 (*Letters*, p. 457), written while he was ill. The letter immediately before this, to Georgiana Keats, ending January 28, showed no evidences of illness. Brown, therefore, placed Keats's first haemorrhage too early.

Letters from Brown corroborate Miss Lowell's date. A note of Dilke in his copy of Milnes's *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* (ii. 53) states: 'In Brown's letter at Belmont Castle I find "Hampstead, 11 Feb. 1820. Mr. Keats fell very ill yesterday week [i.e. February 3]: he is somewhat better, but I am in a very anxious state about him."' From the same source

we find (ii. 59): '24 Mar. 1820, Brown's letter at Belmont Castle "I have been nurse night and day to Mr. Keats for seven weeks."' Seven weeks would also place the date exactly at February 3.

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97. Even in November 1820, after Keats had reached Rome, his illness was not definitely diagnosed as pulmonary. Dr. Clark, who attended him in Rome, wrote to a friend on November 27, 1820: 'The chief part of his [Keats's] disease, as far as I can yet see seems seated in his Stomach. I have some suspicion of disease of the heart and it may be of the lungs.' (Lowell, ii. 502.) And yet, three months later, Severn stated that the autopsy on Keats showed that 'the lungs were completely gone, the doctors could not conceive how he had lived in the last two months'. (Sharp, p. 94.)
98. Dr. Robert Bree was Keats's physician during the spring of 1820. (Lowell, ii. 401.) An unpublished letter from Brown to Dilke, dated May 2, 1826, contains a copy of the accounts between Brown and Keats of 1820, and shows that Dr. Bree was paid four guineas for his professional services in March. (Brewer Bequest, Keats Museum.)
99. Miss Lowell (ii. 411) says that Keats moved to 2 Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town, on Brown's departure. The account, referred to in note 98, shows that Brown paid one guinea on May 4 as 'one week's rent in advance at Kentish Town'.

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100. 'The Cap and Bells'.
101. 'Dilke's' is a reasonable conjecture for the deletion, for Brown corresponded with Dilke more regularly than with other members of the Keats circle.

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102. Keats reported to his sister on June 23, 1820, that he had received a letter from George. (*Letters*, p. 496.) The letter to Brown, therefore, is of an earlier date.
103. Brown made no practice of supplying a × for each letter of the names he omitted. The fact, therefore, that 'Bailey' exactly fits this space does not argue that Keats wrote 'Bailey' here.



In 1819 he had moved from Carlisle and become Vicar of Dallington, Northamptonshire. (*Letters*, p. xlv.) Brown had visited Bailey in Carlisle in 1818, after Keats had returned to England (unpublished letter, collection of Lord Crewe, Bailey to Milnes, May 7, 1849), and he may have planned to stop in Dallington to see him during his journey in 1820. But Keats's friendship for Bailey seems to have cooled by this time, since the last extant letter from Keats to Bailey is dated August 14, 1819.

104. No explanation can be offered of Keats's bad behaviour. It may, however, concern the disapproval which Keats felt for Bailey's marriage to Hamilton Gleig after his courtship of Mariane Reynolds. (See *Letters*, pp. 304-5 and 368 n.)
105. Milnes (p. 205) reads 'could', as does *Letters* (p. 492).
106. Milnes and *Letters* read 'different'.
107. Mr. M. B. Forman (p. 493 n.) suggests that this may have been Thomas Monkhouse, as Crabb Robinson recorded in his diary for June 21, 1820, that he spent that evening at Monkhouse's with Lamb, Wordsworth, and Talfourd.

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108. Mr. M. B. Forman (p. 493 n.) identifies the exhibition as that of the British Institution. He also identifies the portraits which Keats mentioned.
109. 'Lucy Vaughan Lloyd' was the pseudonym under which Keats planned to issue 'The Cap and Bells'.

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110. Brown included a visit to the Hebrides on his long walking tour in Scotland. He was in Skye about July 1, as Keats mentioned receiving a letter from him 'dated Dunvegan Castle, Island of Skye' when he wrote to his sister on July 5, 1820. (*Letters*, p. 498.)
111. Mr. M. B. Forman (p. 514) conjecturally dated this letter about August 20, since Milnes (p. 206) did not give Brown's date. Brown's evidence is based on the document itself and should be accepted, even though Keats was frequently inaccurate concerning dates. If this letter to Brown was written on August 14, Keats's letter to his sister postmarked August 14 (*Letters*, p. 504) must have been written a day or two earlier, for to his sister Keats wrote: 'Yesterday I received an invitation

from Mr Shelley . . . to spend the Winter with him.' To Brown, Keats wrote: 'Last week I received a letter from Shelley . . . asking me to spend the winter with him.' Shelley's letter (*Letters*, pp. 505-6) is dated Pisa, July 27, 1820. The Italian postmark is simply 'Livorno' and the English postmark is 'FPO 10 AU 1820'. This means that the letter arrived in England on August 10 and should have reached Keats within a day or two.

112. Keats doubtless confided in Brown that he was engaged to Fanny Brawne. The secret, which Brown refers to so mysteriously, became known to other members of the Keats circle after he went to Italy. One of Reynolds's sisters wrote to Mrs. Dilke: 'I hear that Keats is going to Rome, which must please all his friends on every account. I sincerely hope it will benefit his health, poor fellow. His mind and spirits must be bettered by it; and absence may probably weaken, if not break off, a connexion that has been a most unhappy one for him.' (C. W. Dilke, *The Papers of a Critic*, 1875, i. 11.)

In moments of anguish during the summer of 1820 Keats charged his fiancée with 'the habit of flirting with Brown' (*Letters*, p. 496) and showed the bitterest jealousy of his friend. In a letter, probably of August 1820, he wrote to Fanny Brawne: 'I see nothing but thorns for the future—wherever I may be next winter in Italy or nowhere Brown will be living near you with his indecencies—I see no prospect of any rest.' (*Letters*, p. 503.) Keats's illness and despondency, rather than any act of Brown and Fanny, undoubtedly caused this jealous agitation.

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113. Milnes (p. 206) and *Letters* (p. 514) read 'among the literary people'.
114. Brown said that this letter was written 'a few days after' the one he had just quoted. It should be dated, therefore, about August 16 or 18. Keats actually left Hampstead for Italy on September 13.
115. Milnes (p. 207) and *Letters* (p. 516) read 'in every way there'.
116. Elsewhere Brown referred to Keats's death as twenty years before he wrote. This passage must have been in his original version, which he prepared as a lecture at the Plymouth Athenaeum on December 27, 1837 (see Introduction, p. 17).

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117. The *Maria Crowther*, on which Keats and Severn sailed to Naples, left London Docks on September 17 and anchored during that night at Gravesend. It was here that Brown might possibly have seen his friend. (*Letters*, p. 519 n.)
118. Severn left different accounts of his preparations to accompany Keats. In one he said that he had only one day's warning, in the other 'three or four days'. (Sharp, p. 48.)

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119. On December 10, 1819, Severn received the Royal Academy's gold medal for his painting 'The Cave of Despair', based on an episode in *The Faery Queen*. (Sharp, p. 27.) The award, however, did not include, as Brown says, 'his expences to and from Italy, as well as for three years of study there'. Sharp wrote (p. 49): 'With his sanguine temperament, it is quite likely, as he [Severn] says, that, as soon as the suggestion [to accompany Keats] was made to him and he realised its significance, he foresaw the possibility of his gaining at Rome the Royal Academy's travelling studentship, as a sequence to the bestowal of the gold medal.'
120. Milnes paraphrased this statement of Brown's in the following sentence (p. 210): 'Nothing was left to him [Brown] but to make his preparations for following Keats as speedily as possible, and remaining with him in Italy, if it turned out that a southern climate was necessary for the preservation of his life.'
- On this passage, Dilke noted in his copy of Milnes (ii. 71): 'This Mr. Milnes must have stated on the authority of Brown & no other. What are the facts? Keats embarked in Sept 1820 & Brown was then in the River—Keats died Feby 1821 and Brown started for Italy in July or August 1822! fifteen or sixteen months after he was dead!'
121. There is no reason to doubt Brown's word, since even Keats's physicians completely misjudged the seriousness of his illness.
122. In the sentence preceding that quoted from Milnes in Note 120, he wrote: 'By an additional irony of fate, when Keats's ship was driven back into Portsmouth by stress of weather, Mr. Brown was staying in the neighbourhood within ten miles when Keats landed and spent a day on shore.' Dilke wrote the following note on this passage: 'When Keats landed and went to my Sisters at Bedhampton—Brown was staying at my

father's at Chichester.' Dilke's sister was Mrs. John Snook of Bedhampton.

123. Mr. M. B. Forman (p. 519) dates this letter Saturday, September 30, 1820, since September 28 was a Thursday. This is the only letter from Keats to Brown of which the holograph is now extant. Mr. Forman's version, printed from the holograph in the Harvard College Library, shows variants in punctuation and capitalization from Brown's version.

124. *1 Henry IV*, III. iii. 6.

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125. This statement supports the date September 30, as the *Maria Crowther* sailed September 17.

126. Keats wrote 'my lungs or stomach'. (*Letters*, p. 520.)

127. Keats wrote 'The very thing which I want to live most for'. (*Letters*, p. 520.)

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128. The holograph has 'Miss Brawne'. Brown also deleted the first part of the following sentence: 'You think she has many faults—but, for my sake, think she has not one — — if there is any thing you can do for her by word or deed I know you will do it.' (*Letters*, p. 520.) Milnes (p. 211), evidently copying the holograph of the letter instead of Brown's inaccurate transcript of it, restored the deletions, but wrote 'Miss——', for he never mentioned Fanny Brawne by name.

129. The holograph has 'Miss Brawne'. (*Letters*, p. 520.)

130. Brown omitted another sentence: 'I seldom think of my Brother and Sister—in america.'

131. The holograph has 'during my last nursing at Wentworth place'.

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132. The holograph has 'dilke'.

133. November 1, 1820, was Wednesday.

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134. Although Brown punctiliously deleted references to Keats's engagement in the earlier letters, he lifted the veil of his mystery here, although he did not reveal Fanny Brawne's name.

135. Milnes (p. 214) and *Letters* (p. 524) read 'would'.

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136. *Letters* (p. 525) reads: 'you will hear Severn's account, from [Haslam].' Colvin (pp. 498-9) quotes from Severn's letter to Haslam of November 1-2.
137. Milnes (p. 214) followed Brown in deleting the name of Keats's fiancée. In his edition of 1883, H. Buxton Forman wrote '[Fanny]' (iv. 112), but in the 1901 edition he removed the square brackets (v. 201). *Letters* (p. 525) also reads 'Fanny' here.

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138. Milnes (p. 217) and *Letters* (p. 527) read 'Reynolds'.
139. Both Milnes and *Letters* omit this sentence and the following one.
140. Milnes and *Letters* read 'Haslam'. The reading can scarcely be correct, however, since Haslam remained on the *Maria Crowther* from London Docks to Gravesend (Lowell, ii. 463). Miss Lowell's statement is corroborated by a letter from Taylor to Fanny Keats, postmarked September 19, 1820, first published by Mrs. Marie Adam in 'Fanny Keats and her Letters', *The Cornhill Magazine*, cliii (February 1936), 138.

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141. Two versions of this letter are extant: one is found in Milnes (pp. 218-19) and Sharp (pp. 69-70), and the other is given here by Brown and in Lowell (ii. 508-10). Sharp stated that the letter was addressed to Mrs. Brawne and began 'My dear Madam'; Milnes did not name the recipient nor include the salutation; the versions of Sharp and Milnes, however, are almost identical, since the source undoubtedly was a draft or copy of the letter in Severn's possession.
- It seems most probable, however, that the letter which he actually sent is given more accurately in the Brown and Lowell versions. Miss Lowell owned a contemporary copy of this letter (now in the Amy Lowell Collection of the Harvard College Library), which begins 'My dear Brown'. Although the copy does not exactly coincide with Brown's version, it agrees very closely and differs from the Milnes-Sharp version in several

important passages. The sentences concerning Mrs. Brawne (see notes 160, 172, and 177) show that the letter from which the Lowell copy was made could not have been addressed to her. The Brawnes, living in Dilke's side of Wentworth Place in 1820 and 1821, were Brown's closest neighbours. Severn might conceivably have sent the same letter to two correspondents who saw each other rarely, but one letter would have amply sufficed for Brown and the Brawne family.

- 142. Milnes and Sharp delete 'our'.
- 143. Milnes, Sharp, and Brown agree. Lowell reads 'what I almost thought convalescence'.
- 144. Milnes and Sharp omit this sentence.
- 145. Milnes and Sharp read '*Dec. 17th, 4 a.m.*'
- 146. Milnes and Sharp read 'the first sleep'.
- 147. For this sentence, Milnes and Sharp read: 'I hope he will not wake till I have written, for I am anxious [that] you should know the truth; yet I dare not let him see I think his state dangerous.'
- 148. Lowell reads 'unusual'.
- 149. Lowell reads 'near'.
- 150. For this sentence, Milnes and Sharp read: 'On the morning of this attack he was going on in good spirits, quite merrily, when, in an instant, a cough seized him, and he vomited two cupfulls of blood.'

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- 151. For this sentence, Milnes and Sharp read: 'In a moment I got Dr. Clark, who took eight ounces of blood from his arm—it was black and thick.'
- 152. For this sentence, Milnes and Sharp read: 'What a sorrowful day I had with him!'
- 153. Lowell reads 'means'. Milnes and Sharp omit the entire sentence.
- 154. Lowell reads 'broke forth again'. From this point to the end of the letter, the variants in Milnes and Sharp are too numerous to be noted. The Brown and Lowell versions are much more complete, since in Milnes and Sharp many sentences and phrases are transposed or omitted.

155. Lowell omits 'so'.  
156. Lowell suppressed this clause, but it is present in the Harvard College copy of the letter.  
157. Lowell reads 'lesser'.  
158. Lowell reads 'image'.  
159. Lowell omits 'every'.

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160. Lowell reads 'Mrs. Brawne's'.  
161. Lowell reads 'in concealing'.  
162. Lowell reads 'gloomy'.  
163. Lowell reads 'is'.  
164. Lowell reads 'after'.  
165. Lowell reads 'Mrs. C.'  
166. Lowell reads '9'.  
167. Lowell reads 'raves that he'.  
168. Lowell reads 'to give him more'.  
169. Lowell reads 'on the one hand'.

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170. Lowell reads 'Dr. C's'.  
171. Lowell reads '4 & 5 times'.  
172. Lowell shows that Brown omitted the next sentence: 'I heard Keats say how he should like Mrs. Brawne and Mrs. Dilk[e] to visit his sister at Walthamstow—will you say this for me—and to Mr. Taylor that Keats was about to write favorably on the very time of his relapse.'  
173. Lowell reads 'expectations'.  
174. Lowell reads 'but'.  
175. Lowell reads 'have been sometimes quite pulled down—for these'.  
176. Lowell reads 'Here I am'.  
177. Lowell omits this sentence, but it is present in the Harvard College copy of the letter, which continues as follows, with the passage deleted by both Brown and Lowell: 'This is a damp to me for I never knew how dear they were to me—I think of my Mother & I think of Keats for they are something the same in this

tormenting Indigestion—But if Keats recovers and their letters bring good news—why I shall take upon myself to be myself again.’ Lowell continues with Brown’s deletion: ‘I wrote last to my good friend Haslam—it will tell you all the events up to the relapse of Keats—I had put the letters in post on the same morning—it was my custom to walk until Keats awoke—we did breakfast about 9 o’clock.’ The Harvard College copy supplies the next sentences, deleted in both Brown and Lowell: ‘My head begins to sally round so much that I cannot recollect—I will write to Mr. Taylor on the next change in my friend, and the kind Mrs. Brawn[e] when I have any good news. Will you remember me to this lady—little did I dream on THIS when I saw her last in London.’

178. Lowell reads ‘Haslam’.

179. Lowell omits ‘Your’s’.

180. Variants in this letter are confusing. Milnes (pp. 220–2) follows Brown, with certain changes and deletions, but Sharp (pp. 89–90) differs from both Brown and Milnes and yet gives fundamentally the same letter. He says it was addressed to Mrs. Brawne, however, and that it was dated February 12. Milnes dates it February 18. It is possible that Severn wrote substantially the same letters to Brown and Mrs. Brawne, although he would more likely have asked one to show his letter to the other by simply going next door. If he did write the same letter to Brown and Mrs. Brawne, the date must have been the same, for he could not have repeated himself so closely after four days. Either Sharp or Brown must be mistaken in his date, and Milnes probably was guilty of carelessness in writing February 18 for February 8, since, like Brown and Sharp, he dates the second section of the letter February 14.

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181. The simile is not necessarily preposterous in a letter to Brown, but it fits better into one to Mrs. Brawne, who had nursed Keats after he left Hunt’s house.

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182. The lines are from Vittorio Alfieri’s *Filippo*, i. i. 19–20. They may be translated:

‘O wretched me! Of solace have I none  
Other than my weeping—and the weeping crime indeed.’



183. Milnes follows Brown exactly at this point. Sharp deletes the sentence following the quotation from Alfieri, and then reads 'Since, a letter has come'. The letter was obviously from Fanny Brawne.
184. Milnes omits this sentence. Sharp reads: 'Then (?) he found many causes of his illness. . . .'

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185. Sharp reads 'three times'. Milnes reads: 'I have got an English nurse to come two hours every other day, so that I am quite recovering my health. Keats seems to like her, but she has been taken ill to-day and cannot come.' Sharp and Milnes omit the rest of this paragraph after this sentence.

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186. The deleted passage may be partially supplied from Sharp, who printed this portion of the letter as follows: 'You astonish me about . . . poor Keats is a martyr to the tricks of these infernal scoundrels, others besides G. . . his is rather the fault of his [head] than his heart. I can understand him—but the others—ten thousand curses light upon them. Not only our friend's life, but his very nature has been torn to pieces by them—that he is here a thousand miles from his dear home, dying without one comfort but me when—I cannot bear to think of it.' The 'scoundrel G.' is obviously George Keats, whom Brown and Severn both accused of dishonesty. The reference to these business matters strongly suggests that the letter was addressed to Brown, instead of to Mrs. Brawne.
187. Milnes (pp. 222-3) gives this letter with minor variants. Sharp (p. 94) quotes only part of the first paragraph, with variants, from an unfinished draft of the letter found among Severn's papers.

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188. This paragraph dates from Brown's revision of 1841. It is important to recognize the fact that Brown, like many other friends of Keats, attributed his decline as much to unfavourable reviews as to tuberculosis.

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189. Brown's error is obvious. Keats's mother died from tuberculosis in 1810, but his father was killed in a riding accident in 1804.

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